



<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Policing Performance Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>18 September 2024</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Online</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Public Polling Insights – August 2024</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>Amanda Coulthard, SPA (Head of Strategy and Performance)</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>YES</b>  <b>Appendix 1</b> – Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland (August 2024)  <b>Appendix 2</b> – Deeper Dive Series II: Rural and Remote Scotland  <b>Appendix 3</b> - Focus Group Qualitative Analysis (people with lower-than-average trust and confidence in the police)

**PURPOSE**

This paper provides the Committee with information relating to three pieces of polling and analytical work undertaken during the summer of 2024.

Three in-depth reports are appended to this paper, each of which contains insights and conclusions.

This paper provides an overview of each of the three pieces of work and provides detail on the next steps being taken.

## 1. Background and Context

- 1.1 In 2022 the Authority commissioned the Diffley Partnership to carry out public polling on a six-monthly basis, aligned to the Authority's mission of overseeing Scottish policing in the public interest.
- 1.2 The polling exercises undertaken by the Diffley Partnership use the established *ScotPulse* national polling panel to gather independent, non-self-selecting and representative data for the Scottish adult population. Core questions relating to public confidence and trust in the police are asked every six months, with additional supplementary questions being asked to address topical policing issues of public interest e.g. policing and its role in mental health safeguarding, the policing of antisocial behaviour, and views on policing culture.
- 1.3 The approach being taken to establish the public's views on policing in Scotland contributes to the Authority's vision of evidence-based policing in the public interest, by providing a large sample which is as representative as possible of the diverse profile of the Scottish population.
- 1.4 This paper summarises three pieces of work arising from recent public polling activity:
  - (1) Public Polling Results from August 2024 – part of the regular six-monthly polling work
  - (2) A deeper dive analysis of confidence and trust in the police in remote / rural Scotland
  - (3) Qualitative analysis of focus groups, specifically examining why some people have low confidence and trust in the police.

The detailed reports for each of these three pieces of work can be found in the appendices to this paper, which contain data, insights and conclusions.

## 2. Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland (August 2024)

- 2.1 This report (**Appendix 1**) provides the Authority with the results of public polling carried out in August 2024 as part of the routine six-

monthly polling series. The report also contains key insights and compares the latest polling results with previous waves of polling.

- 2.2 In addition to the three core questions on trust, confidence and policing performance, the August polling features questions on antisocial behaviour, trust and confidence in public institutions in Scotland, and the public's awareness and views on proportionate investigative responses to crime.
- 2.3 The polling activity ran between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> August, with 2,678 people completing the survey via the *ScotPulse* platform. It should be noted that the early August period saw heightened media activity about policing in the UK as a result of rioting and major unrest taking place in many English cities. Media commentary was frequently negative in tone.
- 2.4 The following key findings are expanded upon within the main report (see Appendix 1):
- 2.5 Overall trust and confidence in the police has increased slightly compared with July 2023 and January 2024, with trust and confidence in local policing being the strongest. Trust and confidence levels continue to be higher among women, people living in rural areas, people living in less deprived areas, people without a limiting mental/physical health condition, and people identified as being upper or middle class based on the social grading of the head of household. The least amount of confidence continues to be expressed regarding the tackling of antisocial behaviour.
- 2.6 Questions were asked about antisocial behaviour in more detail, with the questions mirroring questions asked in July 2023 for comparison purposes. As with 12 months ago, only 7% of people have not observed any antisocial behaviour taking place in their local area. The most prevalent forms continue to be littering/flytipping and dog fouling, speeding/antisocial driving, and inconsiderate or obstructive parking. Levels of concern about different types of antisocial behaviour remain largely unchanged, with drug dealing/use and speeding/antisocial driving being the most concerning types of issue.
- 2.7 For the first time questions have been asked about how the police respond to crime from an investigative perspective, principally how the police prioritise investigative resources in a proportionate way.

The public strongly supports the view that serious crime should be prioritised for investigation over more minor crime. Two-thirds of people also think that in the case of minor crime, the police should prioritise those crimes where there are clear lines of inquiry to follow. There is limited awareness of Police Scotland's new policy position regarding the proportionate investigate response to crime, with 57% of people having no awareness of this change.

### 3. Deeper Dive Series II: Rural and Remote Scotland

- 3.1. This report (**Appendix 2**) is the second deeper dive analysis, looking more closely at the role played by rurality and remoteness in influencing public perceptions about policing.
- 3.2. This second deeper dive uses the same aggregated sample of 10,562 people over four waves of polling as the first deeper dive (which looked at gender and reported to the Policing Performance Committee in [June 2024](#)).
- 3.3. The emphasis in the report is on the views of 2,320 people living in rural and/or remote parts of Scotland, how these differ from the rest of population, and how much variation there is within the rural and/or remote population of the country.
- 3.4. The following key findings are expanded upon within the main report (see Appendix 2):
- 3.5. People living in rural and/or remote areas of Scotland generally have higher levels of trust and confidence in the police, and rate police performance more positively, compared with the rest of Scotland.
- 3.6. Views towards the police tend to be more positive in relation to a number of policing matters in the largely rural and remote areas of Scotland, principally Highland and Island, North East Scotland, and South Scotland.
- 3.7. Whilst there is less confidence in the police and more negative ratings of performance for tackling antisocial behaviour than most other aspects of policing, the view among people living in more rural and remote areas of Scotland is clearly more positive than people who live in the rest of Scotland, especially in Highland and Island.

## 4. Focus Group Qualitative Analysis

- 4.1. This report (**Appendix 3**) contains in-depth qualitative analysis based on the use of two focus groups. The research was conducted in May 2024 by the Diffley Partnership on behalf of the Authority. The Policing Performance Committee has previously expressed the view that deriving qualitative insights into what drives confidence and trust in policing would add value to existing high-level public polling activity.
- 4.2. Participants were recruited to these particular focus groups on the basis that they had consistently expressed low levels of trust and confidence in the police, and the purpose behind the two focus groups was to unpack the reasons for low trust and confidence and identify ways in which trust and confidence might be improved.
- 4.3. The detailed report contains a wide range of insights into why some people hold negative views about the police. As a very high-level summary, the following observations form overall highlights:
  - Problems associated with antisocial behaviour, the behaviour of young people, and issues relating to speeding and use of mopeds off-road are cited as problematic issues that require to be addressed.
  - Communication about policing activity is insufficient, combined with a perception that the police are not sufficiently visible to communities.
  - The police service is viewed as having cultural/attitudinal problems that translate into how people say they have experienced policing, with some participants referencing a bullying/authoritarian style of interacting with people.
  - High-profile incidents, even where they are historic, are referenced as having a detrimental effect on people's trust and confidence in the police.

## 5. Next Steps

- 5.1 In recognition of the volume of insights generated by these three pieces of work, the Authority's Strategy and Performance team will

be preparing infographic-based summaries for publication on the Insights section of the Authority's website, and on social media platforms over the course of the next few months.

- 5.2 The findings from these three reports will also be shared with the Joint Research and Evidence Forum where there is an expectation that Forum members will consider the extent to which there are any knowledge gaps outstanding.
- 5.3 Further regular polling will be carried out in January 2025 (Wave 6). This will represent the final wave of public polling work under the terms of the existing contract with the supplier.
- 5.4 The deeper dive analytical series will be further developed as follows:
- December 2024:** the views of young people aged 16-24, reporting to December Policing Performance Committee
- March 2025:** the views of people with physical/mental health conditions (limiting and non-limiting) reporting to Policing Performance Committee in Spring 2025.
- 5.5 The public's less positive view on how well antisocial behaviour is being tackled in Scotland has been a key theme running through analysis and insights into what drives trust and confidence in the police, and what influences the public's view on how well the police are performing. In recognition of this, the Authority's Strategy and Performance team is in the process of producing more detailed analysis on the policing of antisocial behaviour in Scotland, with evidence from polling activity informing this work.
- 5.6 Authority staff are also engaging regularly with the Scottish Government's Independent Working Group on Antisocial Behaviour, and will share data and insights with the working group to strengthen the group's evidence-based understanding of the subject.

## 6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. There are no direct financial implications in this report.

**7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

7.1. There are no direct personnel implications in this report.

**8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1. There are no direct legal implications in this report.

**9. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1. There are no direct reputational implications in this report.

**10. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1. There are no direct social implications in this report.

**11. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

11.1. There are no direct community implications in this report.

**12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

12.1. There are no direct equalities implications in this report.

**13. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

13.1. There are no direct environment implications in this report.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)**

Members are invited to note and discuss the contents of this report the accompanying appendices.





2024

# Public Perceptions of Policing in Scotland

Key Findings



SCOTTISH POLICE  
AUTHORITY  
ÙGH DARRAS POILIS NA H-ALBA





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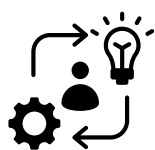
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# Introduction

Diffley Partnership was commissioned to conduct regular polling of the Scottish adult (16+) public on policing in Scotland and related issues of interest to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). This report sets out the key findings of the fifth wave of polling, conducted from 7th to 11th August 2024. Wave 1 was conducted in July/August 2022, wave 2 in January/February 2023, wave 3 in July 2023 and wave 4 in January 2024.



## Methodology

The survey was designed by Diffley Partnership. The survey and its insights include both key indicators which are captured at regular intervals as well as topical elements to inform the SPA's decisions and strategy.

Invitations to complete the survey were sent out through the online ScotPulse panel between the 7th - 11th August 2024, and received 2,678 responses. Responses were tabulated and analysed quantitatively, including significance testing for between groups differences in opinion. Survey data is weighted to the age and gender profile of the Scottish population.



## Presentation and interpretation of findings

This report summarises the key findings of this polling, drawing out noteworthy findings and between groups differences. We begin by exploring people's confidence and trust in the police compared to the last two waves of data collection, before exploring how trust and confidence have changed over the past 12 months in various institutions. The report concludes by exploring insights into the newly implemented proportionate response policy.

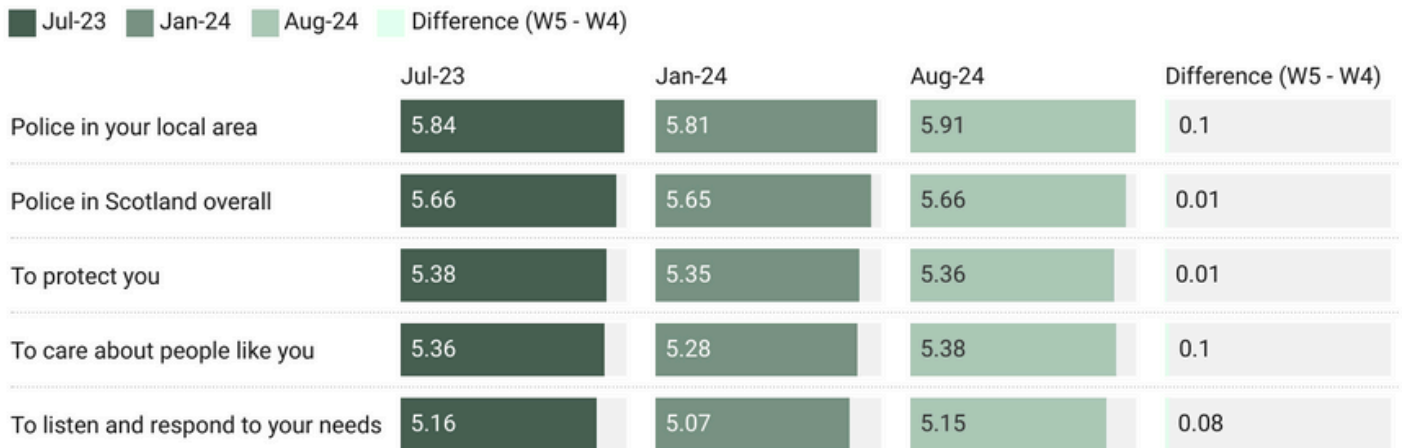
We explore each aspect in turn, with the aid of data visualisations, and comment on significant differences between demographic groups.

# Trust in the Police

Respondents were asked how much trust they have in the police in a number of areas, on a scale of 0 "do not trust at all" to 10 "trust completely".

The graph below shows differences in the most recent three waves of data collection. The differences quoted are between August 2024 and January 2024.

For the first time since beginning data collection, all differences are increasing.



Local police continue to receive the highest level of trust from the public (5.91) and are closely followed by police in Scotland overall (5.66). Scores have seen a small positive increase between January 2024 and August 2024.

In terms of actions, police are trusted to protect (5.36) and care about people (5.38) to around the same degree, with trust to listen and respond to people's needs continuing to receive the lowest average rating (5.15). The average trust ratings continue to show that, overall, police are more trusted than not trusted on all measures.

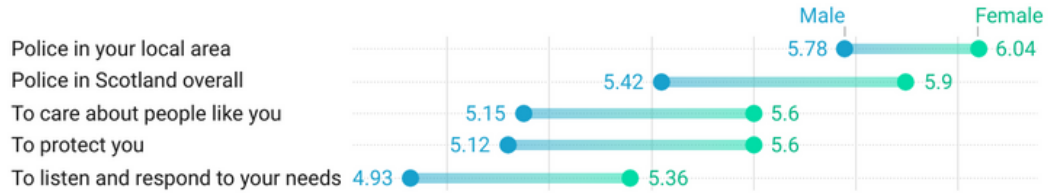
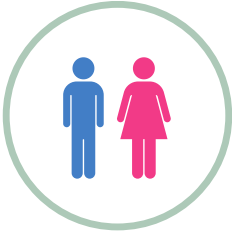
# 47%

of respondents have a high level of trust  
in police in their local area  
(rated as 7 to 10 out of 10)

# Variations in Trust: Demographics

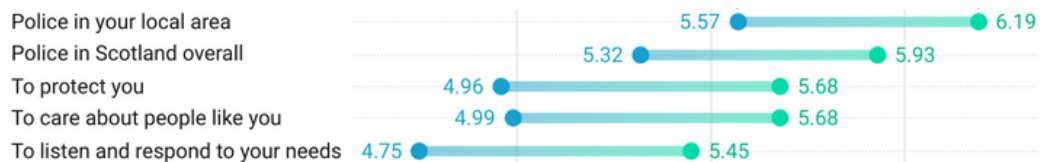
Trust in the police varies greatly depending on demographic factors.

## 01. Gender



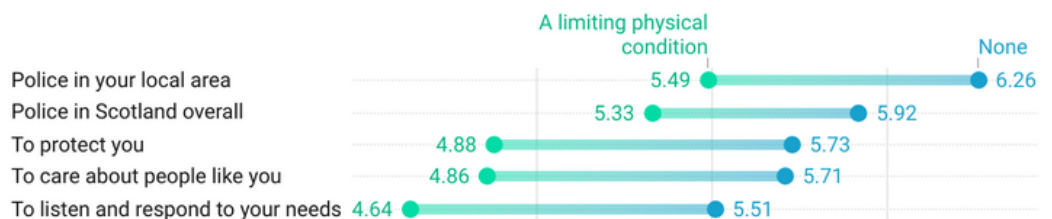
Males are significantly more likely to have less trust in police for all aspects. Despite fluctuations, this has been observed across all data collection waves.

## 02. Social grade



Working-class people (those in the C2DE category) continue to have less trust in the police than people who are middle and upper class (ABC1). Differences observed here are much greater than others, ranging between 0.56 and 0.77.

## 03. Health



People with a limiting physical condition are more likely to have less trust in the police than those with no health conditions. This has been remained true across wave four and wave five. Average scores for those with limiting physical conditions fall below the midpoint for 'to protect you' (4.88), 'to care about people like you' (4.86) and 'to listen and respond to your needs' (4.64).

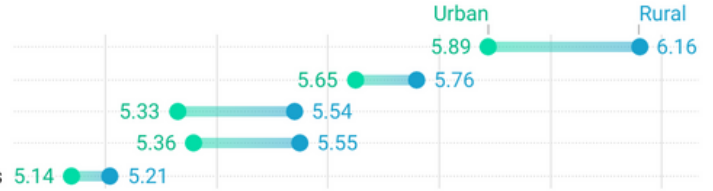
# Variations in Trust: Geographics

Trust in the police also varies depending on geographic factors.

## 01. Urban vs Rural



Police in your local area  
 Police in Scotland overall  
 To protect you  
 To care about people like you  
 To listen and respond to your needs

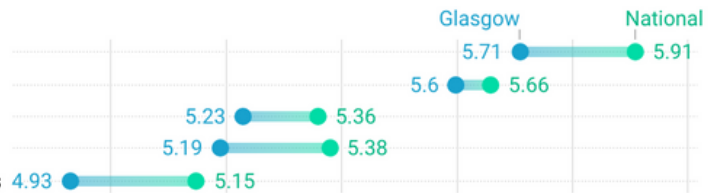


People in urban areas continue to be more likely to have less trust in the police for all factors than those from rural areas. Those in rural areas are particularly trusting in their local police, with an average of 6.19 out of 10.

## 02. Parliamentary Area



Police in your local area  
 Police in Scotland overall  
 To protect you  
 To care about people like you  
 To listen and respond to your needs

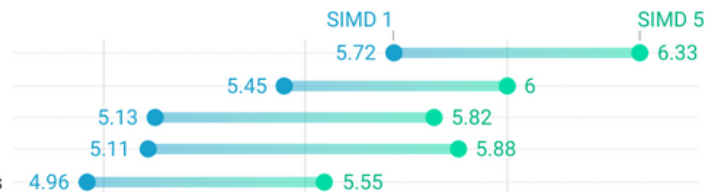


People in Glasgow continue to have less trust in the police than the national average. However, this has increased from January 2024.

## 03. Areas of Deprivation



Police in your local area  
 Police in Scotland overall  
 To protect you  
 To care about people like you  
 To listen and respond to your needs

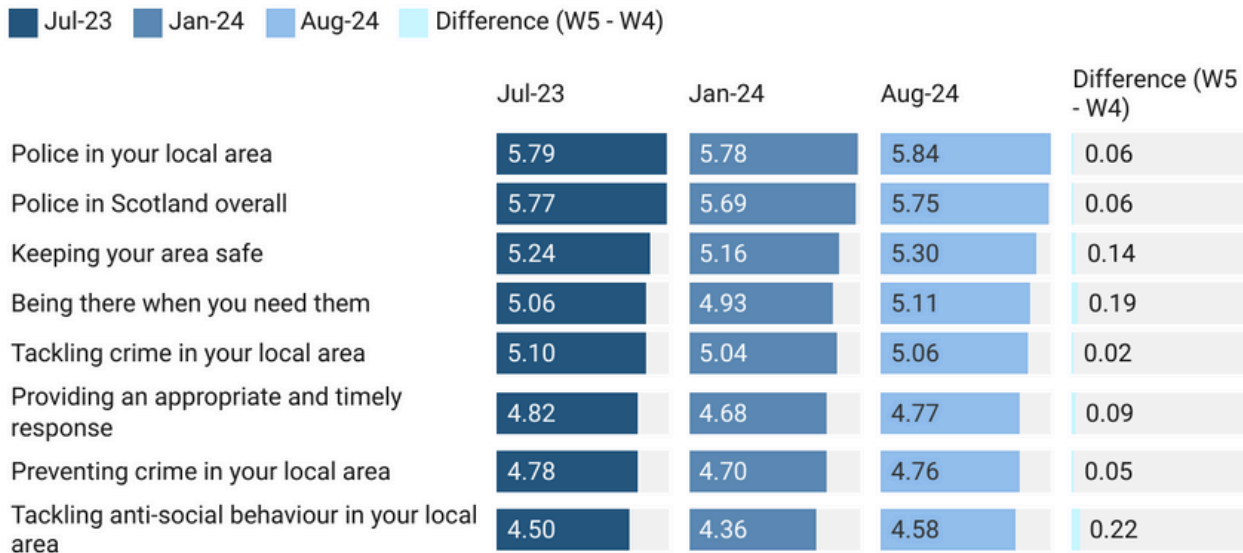


People in the least deprived areas (SIMD5) are likely to hold more trust in the police than those in the most deprived (SIMD1) areas. Those in SIMD 5 areas award above-average scores to the police for all aspects, indicating there is more trust than distrust in these areas. In an increase from January 2024, those in SIMD1 award lower than average scores only for listening and responding (4.96), however more distrust remains in these areas.

# Confidence in Police

Respondents were asked how much confidence they have in the police in a number of areas, on a scale of 0 "no confidence at all" to 10 "complete confidence".

As observed with trust, all aspects of confidence are trending upwards. Differences quoted are between August 2024 and January 2024.



Confidence in police in your local area (5.84) and Scotland overall (5.75) are higher than 5 out of 10, indicating that the public has more confidence than no confidence in police overall.

This is also true for the police keeping your area safe (5.30), being there when you need them (5.11) and tackling crime in your local area (5.06).

Despite increasing between January and August 2024, the average level of confidence reported by members of the public remains below 5 out of 10 for providing an appropriate and timely response (4.77), preventing crime in local areas (4.76) and tackling anti-social behaviour in their local areas (4.58).

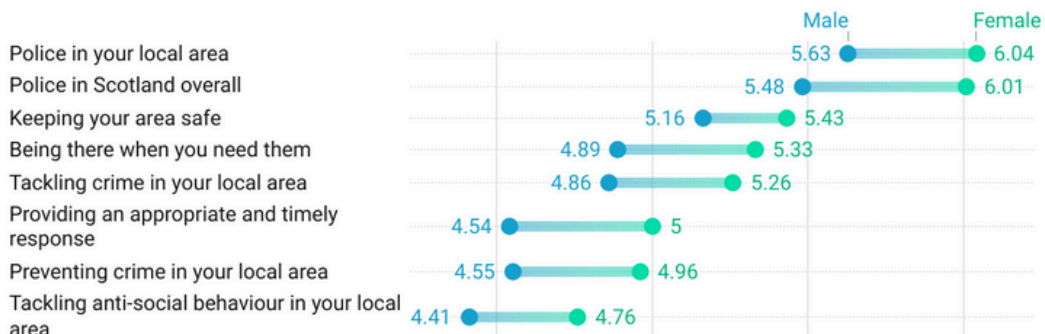
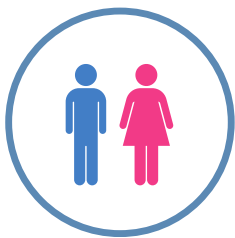
# 44%

**of respondents have high confidence in  
police in their local area  
(rated as 7 to 10/10)**

# Variations in Confidence: Demographics

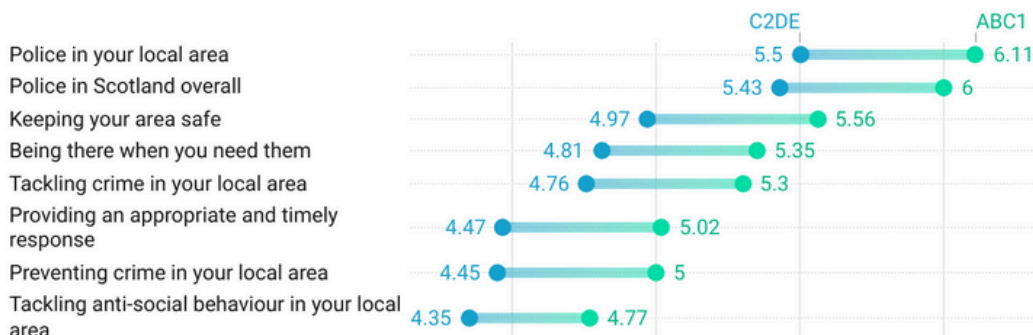
Levels of confidence in police vary significantly when looking at demographic factors

## 01. Gender



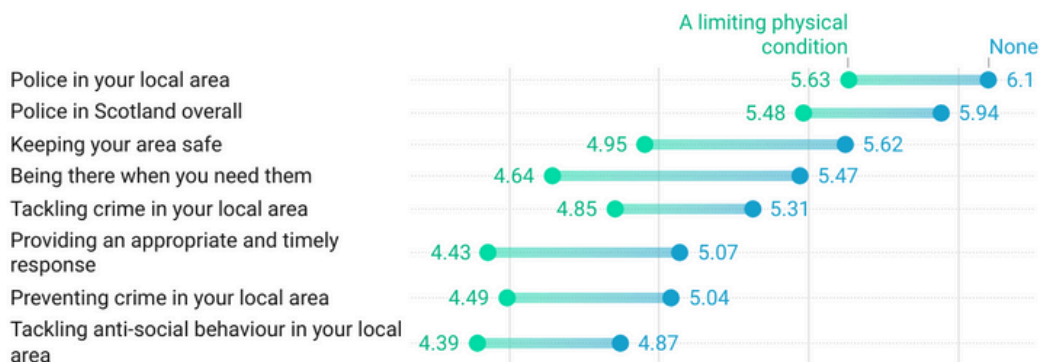
Males are significantly more likely to have less confidence in police for all aspects.

## 02. Social grade



Working class people (those in the C2DE category) have less confidence in the police, than people who are middle and upper class (ABC1)

## 03. Health



People with a limiting physical condition are more likely to have less confidence in the police than those with no health conditions.



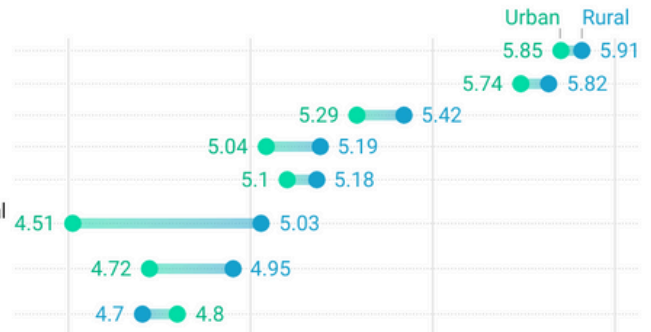
# Variations in Confidence: Geographics

Levels of confidence in police vary significantly when looking at geographic factors.

## 01. Urban vs Rural



- Police in your local area
- Police in Scotland overall
- Keeping your area safe
- Tackling crime in your local area
- Being there when you need them
- Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area
- Preventing crime in your local area
- Providing an appropriate and timely response

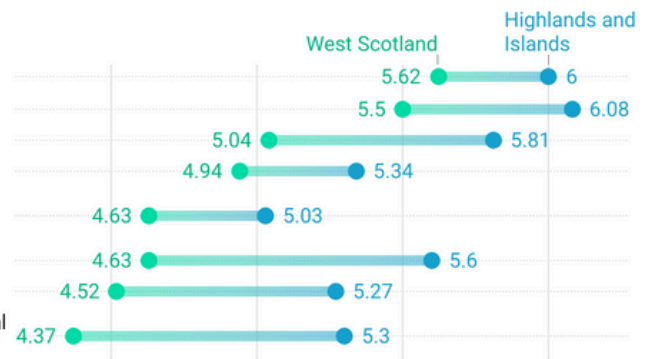


People in rural areas have more confidence in the police across a range of aspects. Those in urban areas continue to have less confidence than confidence in the police tackling anti-social behaviour in the local area (4.51).

## 02. Parliamentary Area



- Police in Scotland overall
- Police in your local area
- Keeping your area safe
- Being there when you need them
- Providing an appropriate and timely response
- Tackling crime in your local area
- Preventing crime in your local area
- Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area

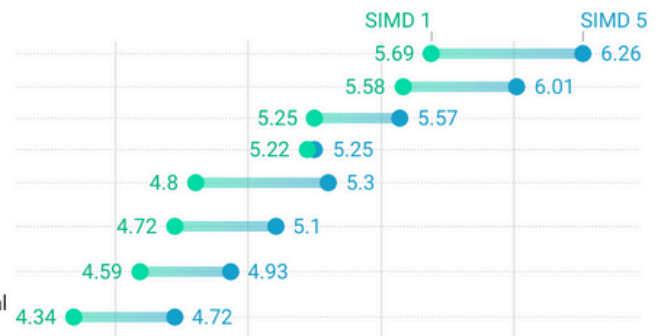


People in the Highlands and Islands region generally have more confidence in the police across the full range of aspects. In the Highlands and Islands all aspects are rated above 5, indicating confidence. While in the West Scotland region most aspects are rated below 5 indicating a lack of confidence in this area.

## 03. Areas of deprivation



- Police in your local area
- Police in Scotland overall
- Keeping your area safe
- Being there when you need them
- Tackling crime in your local area
- Providing an appropriate and timely response
- Preventing crime in your local area
- Tackling anti-social behaviour in your local area



Those living in the most deprived areas (SIMD1) are typically less confident in the police on every measure than those in the most affluent areas (SIMD5).

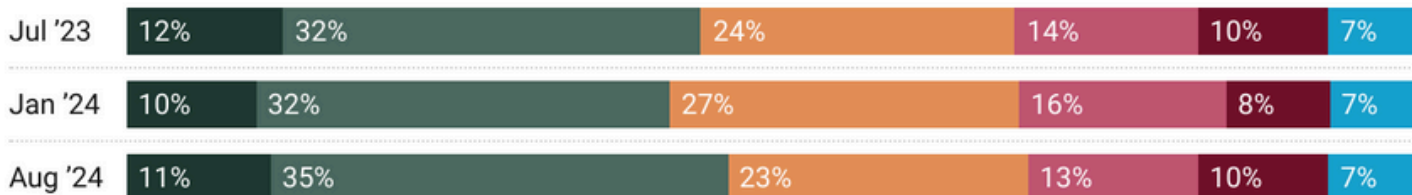
# Performance of Local Police

Respondents evaluated how well or poorly police in their local area perform across a range of tasks.

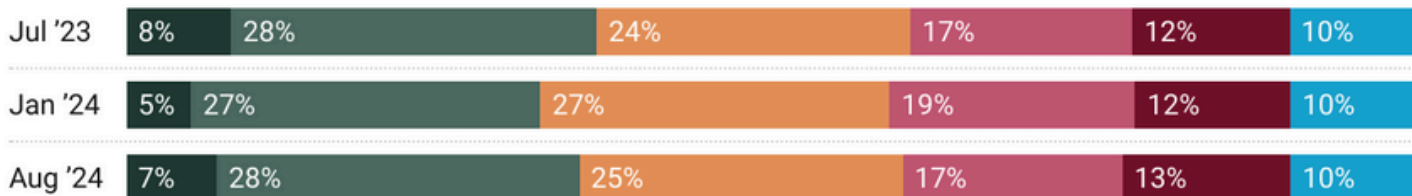
How good or poor a job do you think the police in your local area are doing at the moment in the following regards?

A very good job
  A somewhat good job
  A neither good nor poor job
  A somewhat poor job
  A very poor job
  Don't Know

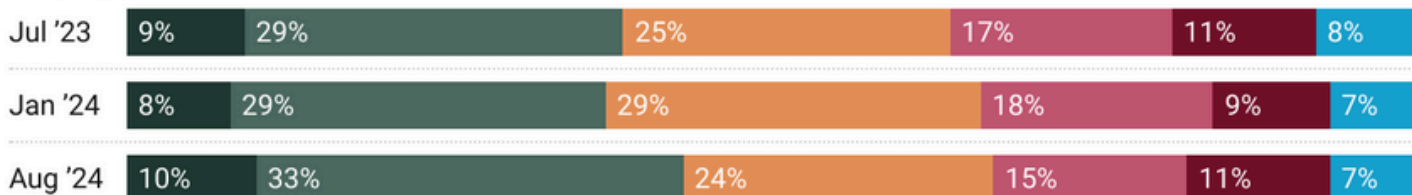
## Policing in general



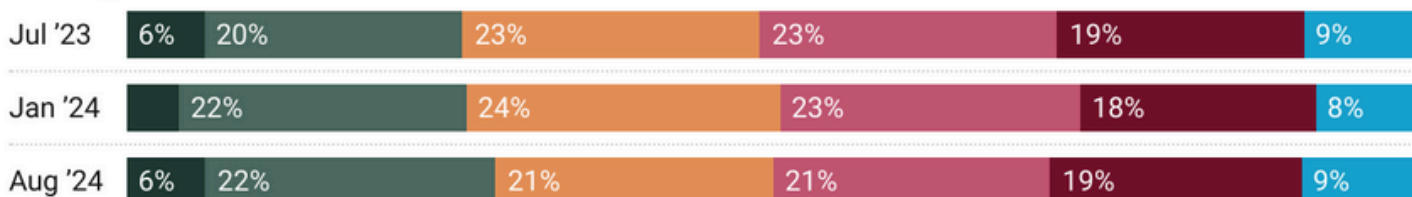
## Tackling crime



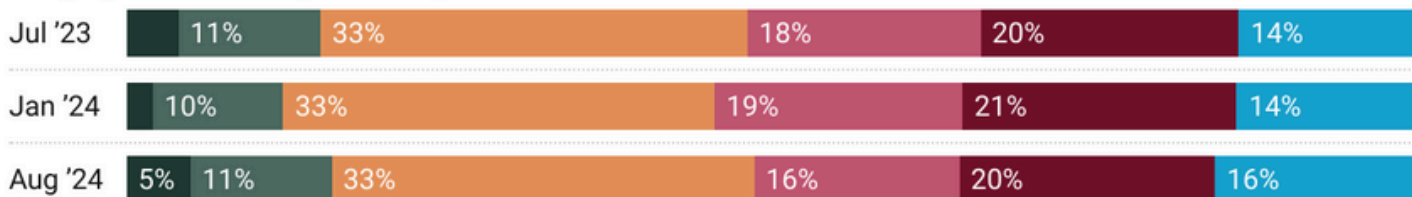
## Keeping your area safe



## Tackling anti-social behaviour



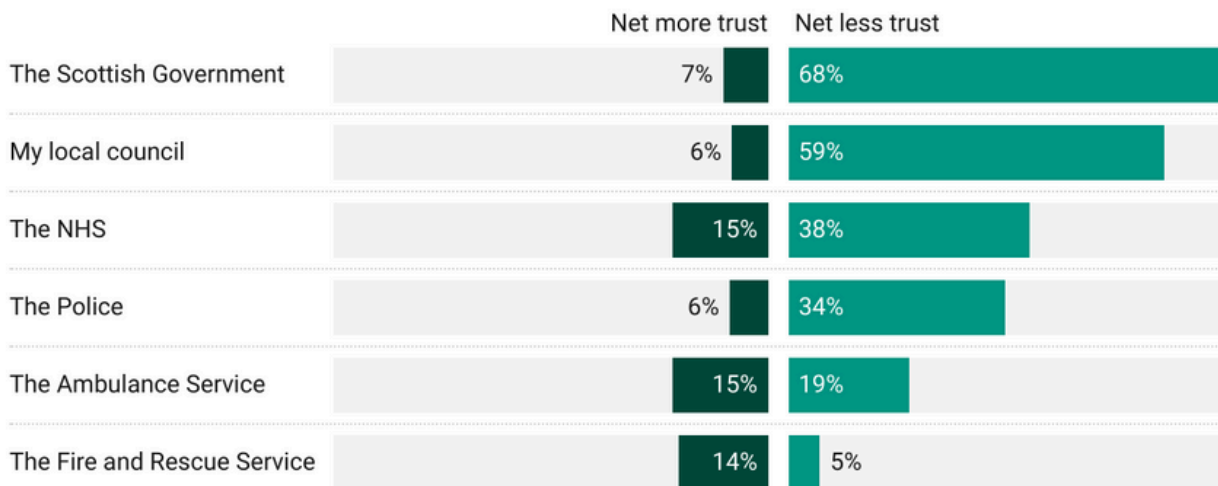
## Bringing the community closer together



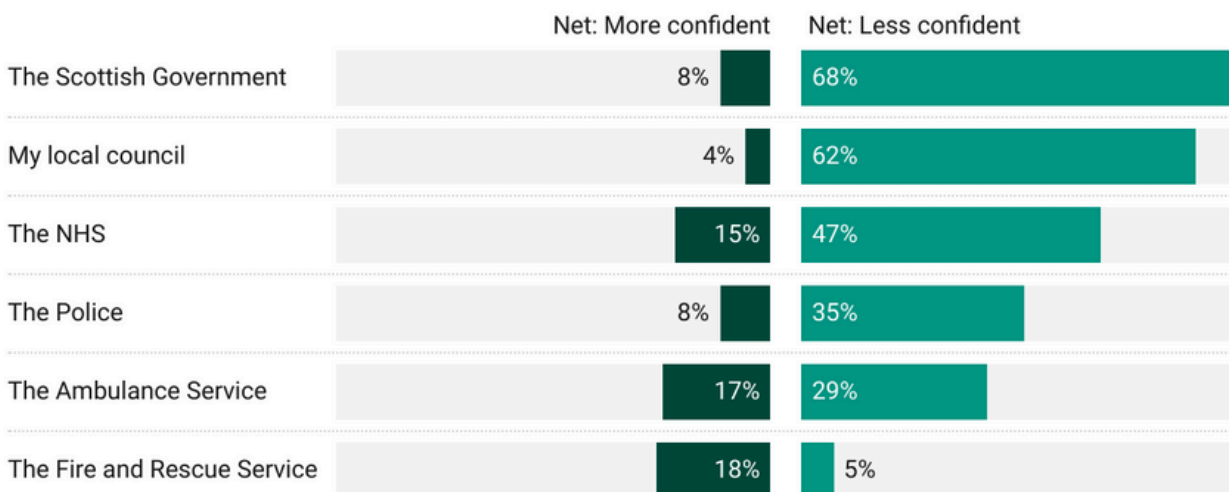
# Trust and Confidence in Institutions

Several questions were asked in this wave of data collection about how trust and confidence in a range of institutions has changed over the past 12 months.

Beginning with how trust in these institutions changed over the past 12 months, the most trust has been lost in The Scottish Government, with two-thirds indicating their views have declined (68%), a four percentage point increase from January 2024. Three in five (59%) have also lost trust in their local council, an increase in seven percentage points from January 2024. Around a third (34%) admit they have less trust in the police over the past 12 months.



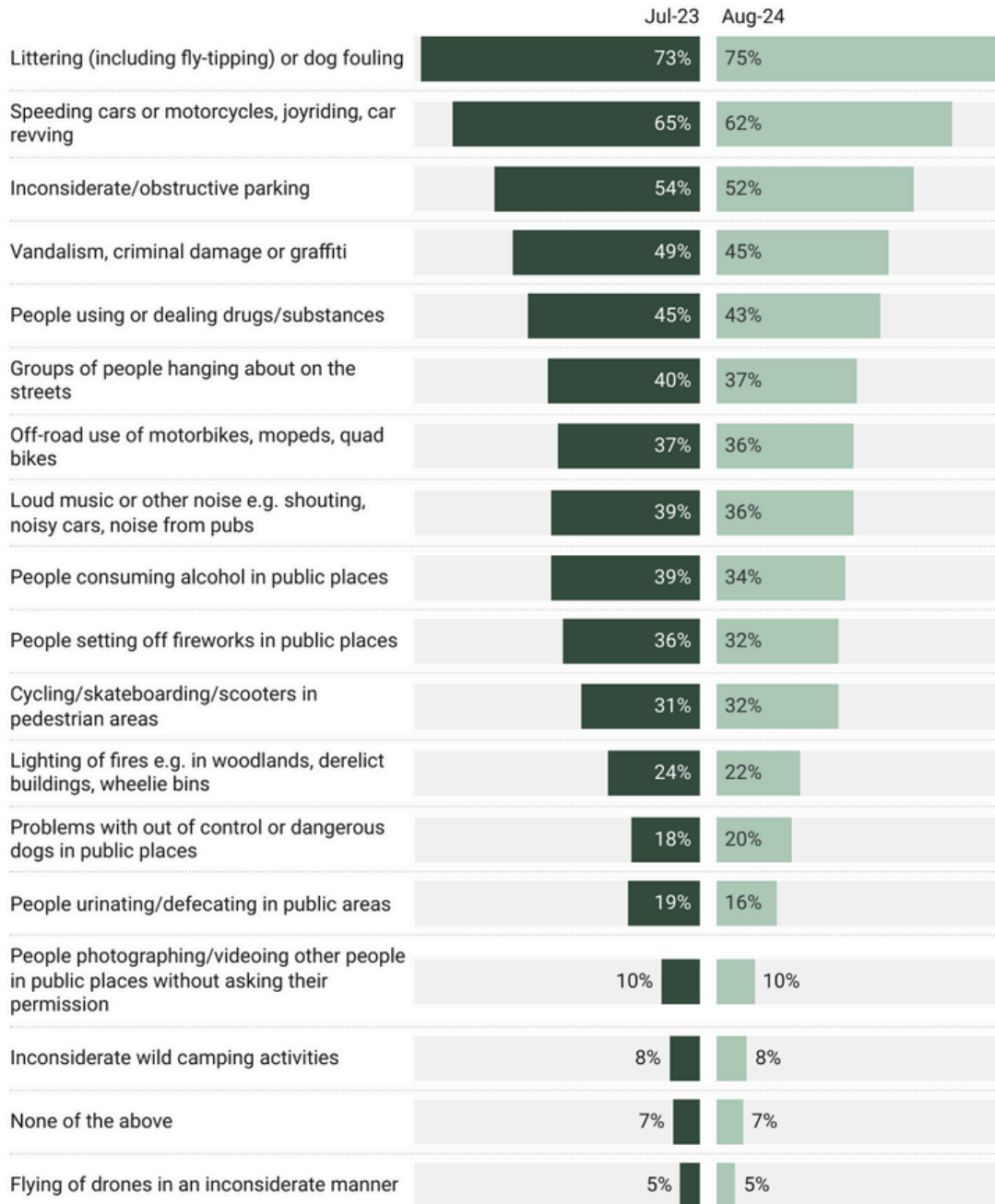
Examining the shift in confidence towards these institutions over the last year, the Scottish Government also experienced 68% of people expressing a loss of confidence. Additionally, 62% have less confidence in their local council, while almost half (47%) have less confidence in the NHS. About a third (35%) have decreased confidence in the police in the past year and three in ten (29%) have less trust in the ambulance service. People are increasingly confident in the Fire and Rescue Service compared to the previous 12 months.



# Perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour

Several questions were asked in this wave of data collection about the prevalence of anti-social behaviour in local areas. These questions were also asked in July 2023.

The chart below outlines the activities observed within our neighbourhoods in the last 12 months. Littering continues to be the most prevalent activity.

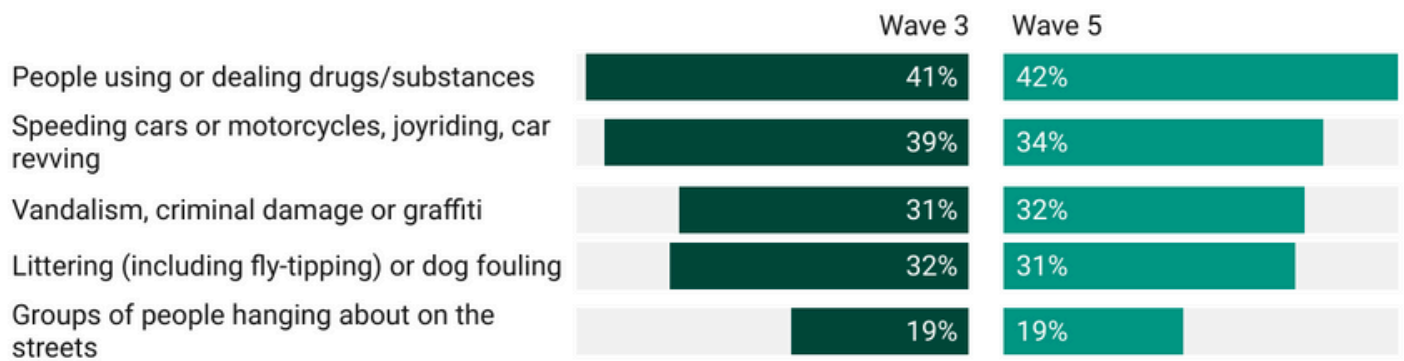


# 7%

of respondents observed no anti-social behaviour in their local area in the past 12 months

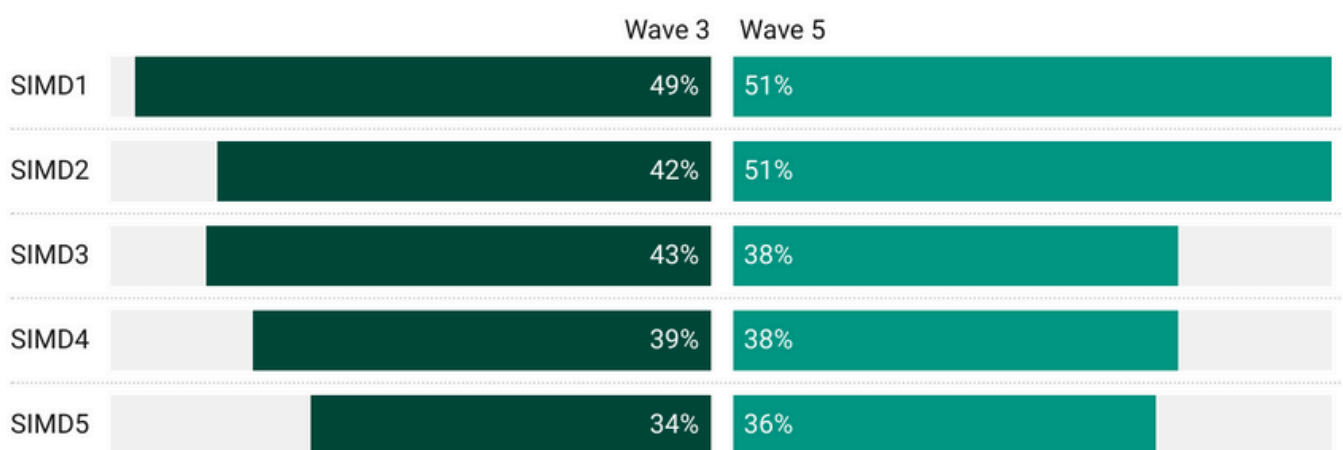
Respondents were also asked to select the three types of activity they were most concerned about.

Despite littering continuing to be the most prevalent activity, only a third of people have been most concerned about this issue across both waves. People using or dealing drugs/substances continues to be the issue respondents are more concerned about (42%).



In a change from July 2023, those in the 40% most deprived areas, SIMD1 and SIMD2, are most worried about people using or dealing drugs/substances in their local area.

More than half (51%) of residents in the most deprived areas in Scotland (SIMD1 and SIMD2) believe using or dealing drugs/substances in their local area is an issue. Whereas only a third (36%) of those in the most affluent areas (SIMD5) are worried about people using or dealing drugs/substances.



The types of activity people living in most affluent areas (SIMD5) are concerned about continue to be speeding cars or motorcycles, joyriding and car revving. This has decreased minimally from 41% in July 2023 to 39% in August 2024.

# Taking a Proportionate Response

For this latest wave of data collection, we asked two new questions on the recently implemented proportionate response policy.

Around 4 in 10 respondents were aware of the new policy (43%).



The majority of respondents believe the police should always prioritise the investigation of more serious crimes over minor crimes (85%).

However, more than three quarters (77%) agree that the police should still invest time trying to discover if there are lines of enquiry to follow even if the issue is fairly minor.

Around half of all respondents (52%) believe the police should always prioritise the investigation of crimes with clear lines of enquiry over those without.

■ Net: Agree ■ Neither / Nor ■ Net: Disagree ■ Don't know

The police should always prioritise the investigation of more serious crimes over minor crimes.



If the issue is fairly minor, e.g. issues with low associated threat, harm and risk, the police should still invest time trying to discover if there are lines of enquiry to follow.



If the issue is fairly minor, e.g. issues with low associated threat, harm and risk, the police should prioritise those reports that have clear lines of enquiry to follow.



The police should investigate all minor issues the same way, regardless of whether there are obvious lines of enquiry.



The police should always prioritise the investigation of crimes with clear lines of enquiry over those without.





**ITEM 2.4: Appendix 2:**

**DEEPER DIVE SERIES II: Rural and Remote Scotland**

**1 BACKGROUND AND SUB-SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS**

- 1.1 This deeper dive analysis of public polling data is the second in a series of deeper dives being carried out by staff at the Authority. The first deeper dive analytical piece was presented to the Policing Performance Committee at its meeting in June 2024 and focussed on gender, highlighting how women have higher levels of trust and confidence in the police than men, within older women, women living in more affluent areas and women living in rural and remote areas of Scotland having the most trust and confidence.
- 1.2 This second deeper dive analysis examines views in rural and remote Scotland in more depth and, as per the June 2024 analysis, is based on aggregated waves of SPA polling data collected between 2002 and 2024.
- 1.3 The overall aggregated sample size amounts to 10,562 people from across Scotland, all of whom have been selected randomly from the larger *ScotPulse* panel of more than 43,000 people.
  - Wave 1 was collected in July 2022 and consists of 2,594 people.
  - Wave 2 was collected in February 2023 and consists of 2,663 people.
  - Wave 3 was collected in July 2023 and consists of 2,718 people and
  - Wave 4 was collected in January 2024 and consists of 2,587 people.

These similarly-sized samples, each of a statistically significant size in their own right, were collected at roughly six-monthly intervals over an 18-month period, and collectively form a very large overall sample size to enable reliable sub-group analysis based on geography.

- 1.4 The size of the sub-group population for the purposes of this deeper dive analysis is 2,320 people in total. These have been selected from three groups within the Scottish Government's six-fold classification system of geographic areas in Scotland, taking account of urban/rural characteristics and remote/accessible considerations. The sub-sample size is composed of: 1,214 people



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living in 'Accessible Rural Areas', 680 people living in 'Remote Rural Areas', and 430 people living in 'Remote Rural Towns'. Further details can be found in Table 1, which also shows the geographic distribution of the sub-sample across the 8 Scottish Parliamentary Regions.

- 1.5 As may be expected, a substantial element of the sub-sample population comprises people living in the Highland and Island region of Scotland (36.3%) and in Accessible Rural Areas of North East Scotland, Mid Scotland (including Fife) and South Scotland (a further 36.5% collectively). Less than 10% of people in the sub-sample reside in either Glasgow, Lothian, Central Scotland or West Scotland parliamentary regions.

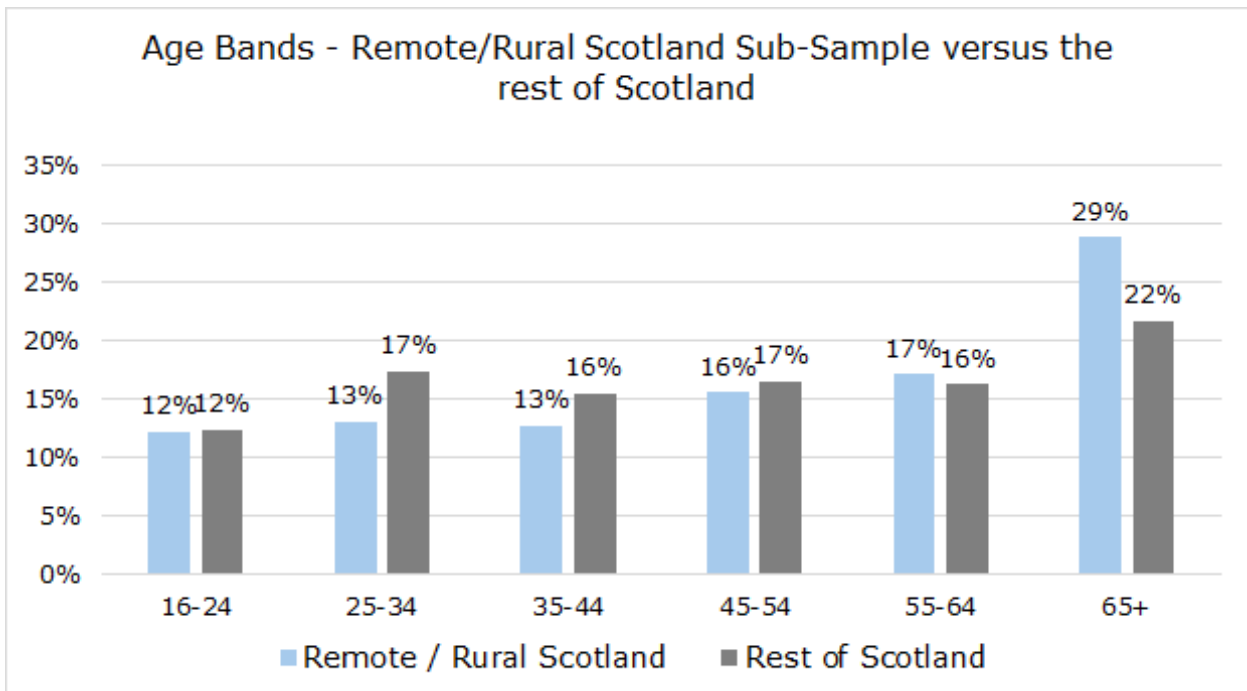
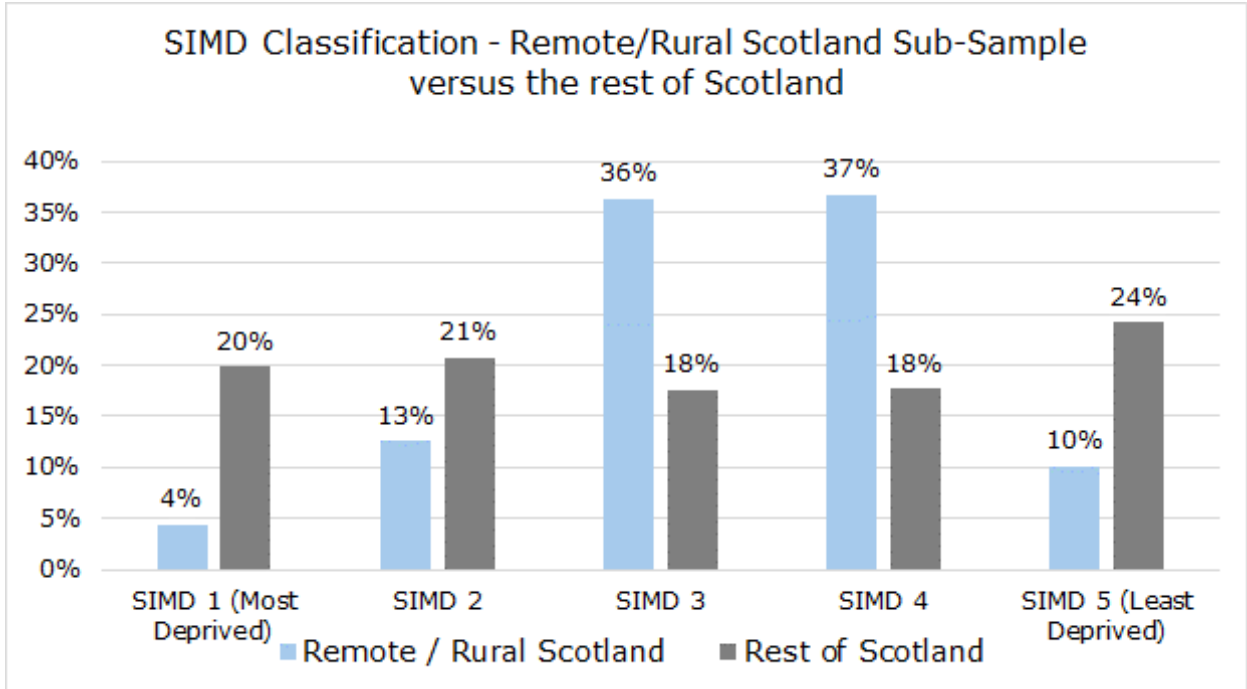
**Sub-Sample Composition by Urban/Rural Classification and Scottish Parliamentary Region**

	CENTRAL SCOTLAND	GLASGOW	HIGHLAND AND ISLAND	LOTHIAN	MID SCOTLAND, FIFE	NORTH EAST SCOTLAND	SOUTH SCOTLAND	WEST SCOTLAND	TOTAL
<b>ACCESSIBLE RURAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>1,213</b>
% OF TOTAL	3.2	0.3	6.7	3.5	12.5	12.5	11.5	2.1	52.3
<b>REMOTE RURAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>436</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>677</b>
% OF TOTAL	0	0	18.8	0	3.3	4.5	2.1	0.5	29.2
<b>REMOTE SMALL TOWNS</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>430</b>
% OF TOTAL	0	0	10.8	0	1.4	3.1	3.3	0	18.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>842</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>398</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>2,320</b>

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- 1.6 Due to the sample size being small for some areas of Scotland, some of the 24 possible categories have been merged to make 10 overall analytic categories for the purposes of this deeper dive. An 11<sup>th</sup> category relates to the rest of Scotland for comparison purposes (8,241 people).
1. Highland and Island Remote Rural: 436 people
  2. North East Scotland Accessible Rural: 290 people
  3. Mid Scotland, Fife Accessible Rural: 289 people
  4. South Scotland Accessible Rural: 267 people
  5. Highland and Islands Remote Small Towns: 251 people
  6. Central Scotland, Glasgow, Lothian and West Scotland Accessible Rural and Remote Rural: 224 people
  7. North East Scotland Remote Rural and Remote Small Towns: 176 people
  8. Highland and Islands Accessible Rural: 155 people
  9. South Scotland Remote Rural and Remote Small Towns: 124 people
  10. Mid Scotland, Fife Remote Rural and Remote Small Towns: 109 people
- 1.7 The sub-sample population of 2,320 people living in rural and/or remote parts of Scotland can be further examined according to its socio-economic composition, contrasting this with the remainder of Scotland. It should be noted that the data presented in this deeper dive analysis follows the same weighting procedure as with regular SPA public polling activity, whereby the responses from the ScotPulse panel survey is weighted to take account of the known distribution of the population according to age and gender, ensuring that analysis of sampled data is representative.
- 1.8 The main points of difference between the Remote-Rural sub-sample population and the rest of the sample (other parts of Scotland) relate to the SIMD deprivation breakdown and age structure). The differences in composition by gender, social grading and household composition are very slight.
- 1.9 In terms of deprivation, as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), the sub-sample shows a high proportion of people live in SIMD quintiles 4 (37%) and 3 (36%). Only 4% of the sub-sample population lives in areas classed as SIMD Quintile 1 (i.e. among the 20% most deprived). This contrasts markedly with the rest of Scotland, where inequalities are much greater, with 41% of the Rest of Scotland sample living in areas classed as SIMD quintiles 1 and 2.

1.10 The Remote-Rural sub-sample has a distinctly different age-group structure compared with the rest of Scotland. There are more older persons (65+) in the sub-sample population (29% versus 22%) and fewer people aged between 25 and 44 (26% versus 33%).



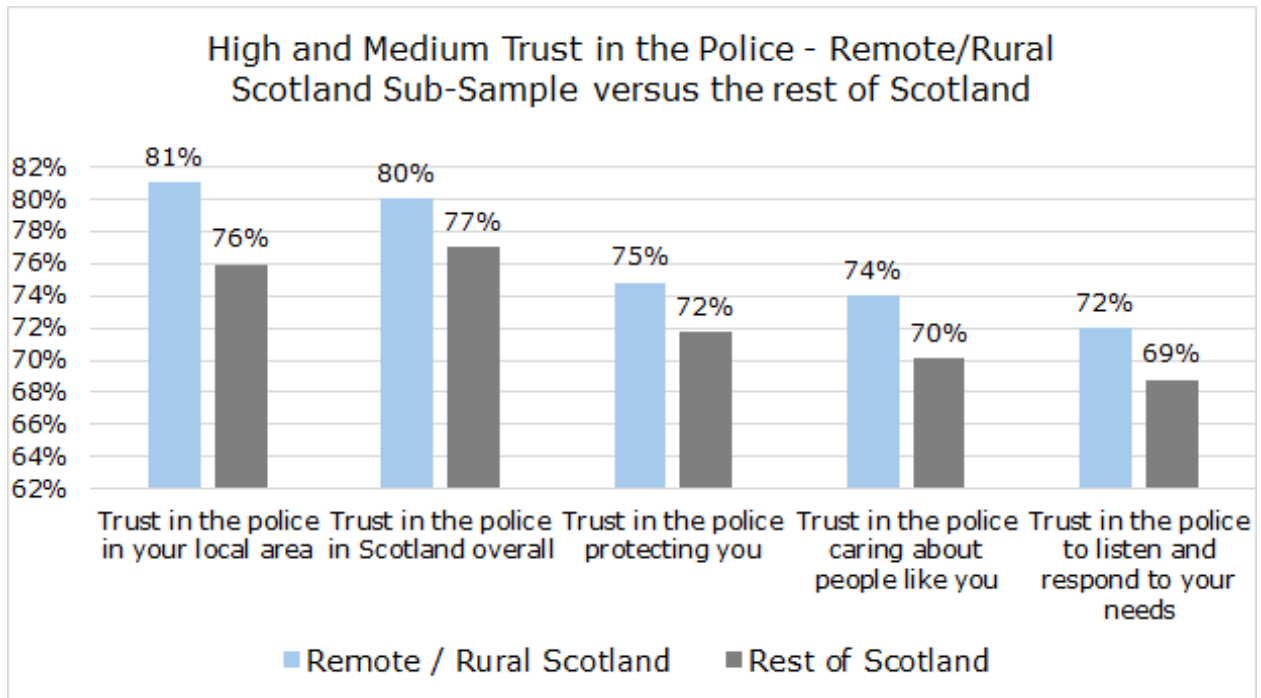
1.11 The sub-sample's gender split is more aligned with the rest of Scotland: 54.6% of the Remote-Rural sub-sample population identifies as female, compared with 51% for the rest of Scotland.

1.12 In terms of National Readership Survey social gradings, both the sub-sample and the rest of Scotland sample have an identical split between ABC1 (professional/managerial/administrative) and C2DE (supervisory/skilled manual/semi-skilled and unskilled workers, and state pensioners and the unemployed): 54.7% for the former and 45.3% for the latter.

## 2 RURAL AND REMOTE SCOTLAND: TRUST IN THE POLICE

2.1 In Remote Rural Scotland as a whole, levels of trust in the police and various aspects of policing are notably higher than for the rest of Scotland, with the differential ranging from between 3% and 5%.

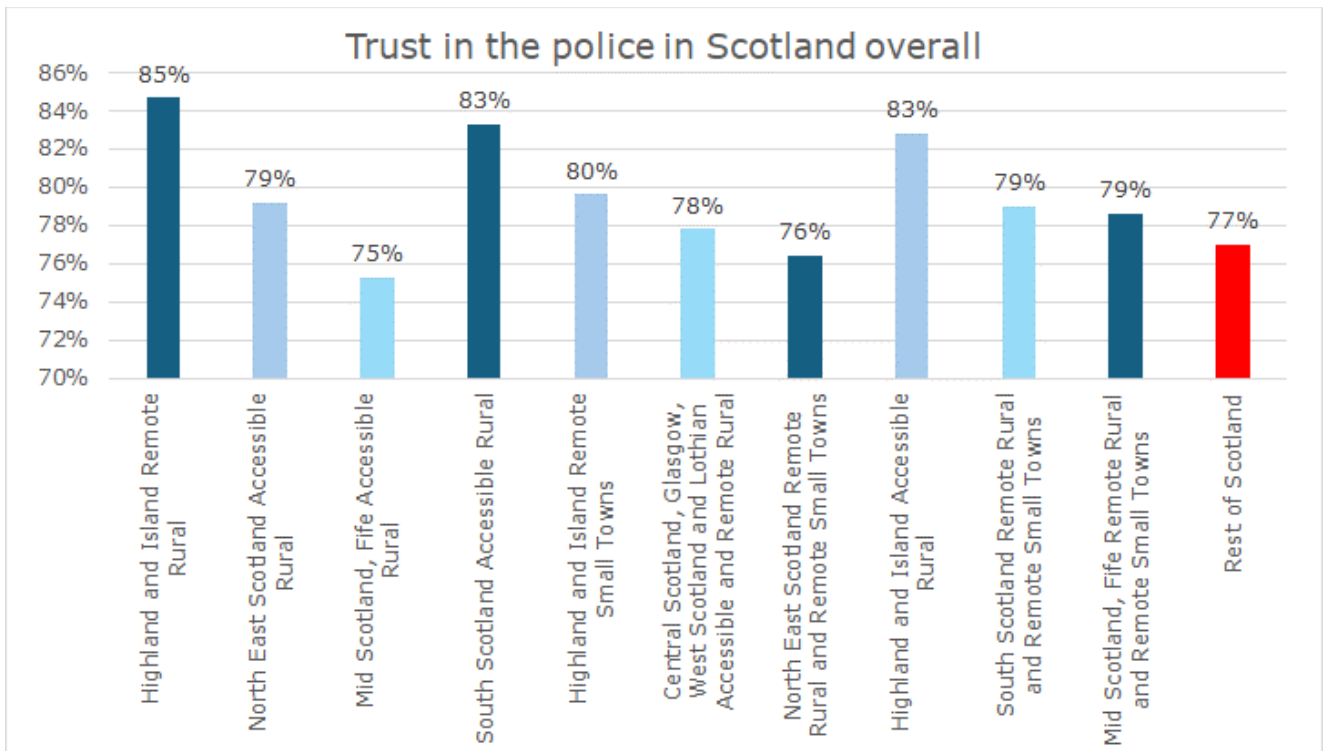
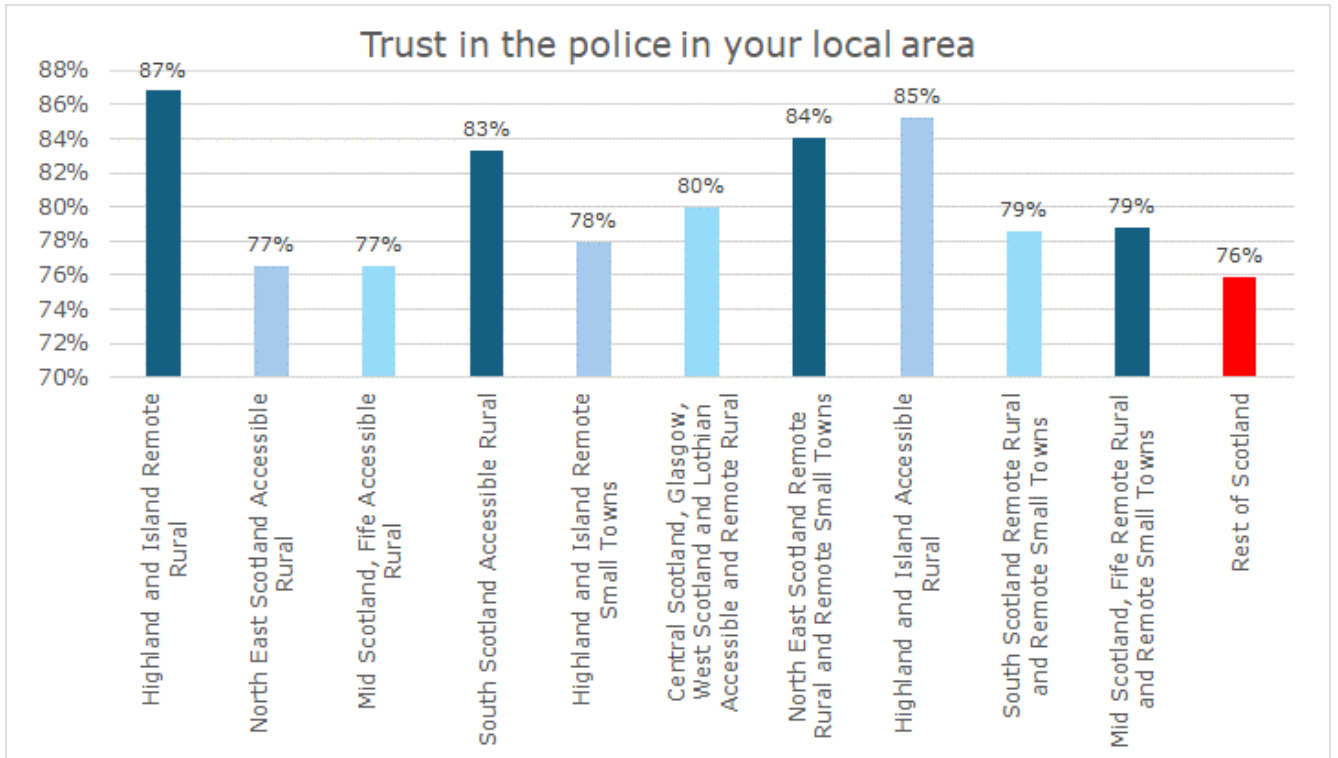
2.2 Trust in local policing is especially strong in Remote and Rural Scotland, with 81% of people expressing high or medium levels of trust. This is five percentage points higher compared with the rest of Scotland.



2.3 A closer examination of the picture within different areas of Rural and Remote Scotland reveals some interesting variations, with rural areas of the Highland and Island parliamentary region scoring well above average in terms of **trust in local policing**: 87% for remote rural areas and 85% for accessible rural areas. Trust is also higher in accessible rural areas in South Scotland and in remote areas of the North East of Scotland.

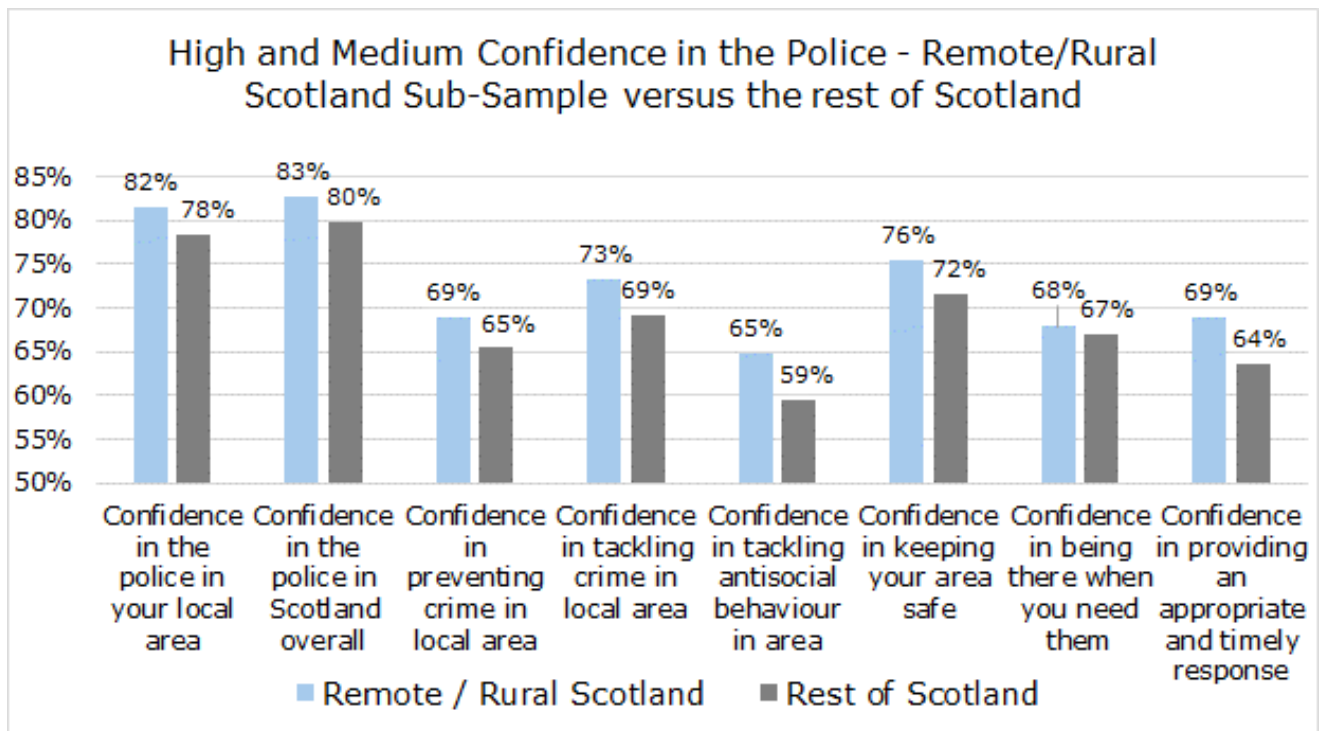
2.4 When looking at **trust in the police more generally**, a similar pattern emerges, although the North East of Scotland (Remote

Rural and Remote Small Towns) shows a lower level of trust than other remote rural areas, and is below the rest of Scotland.



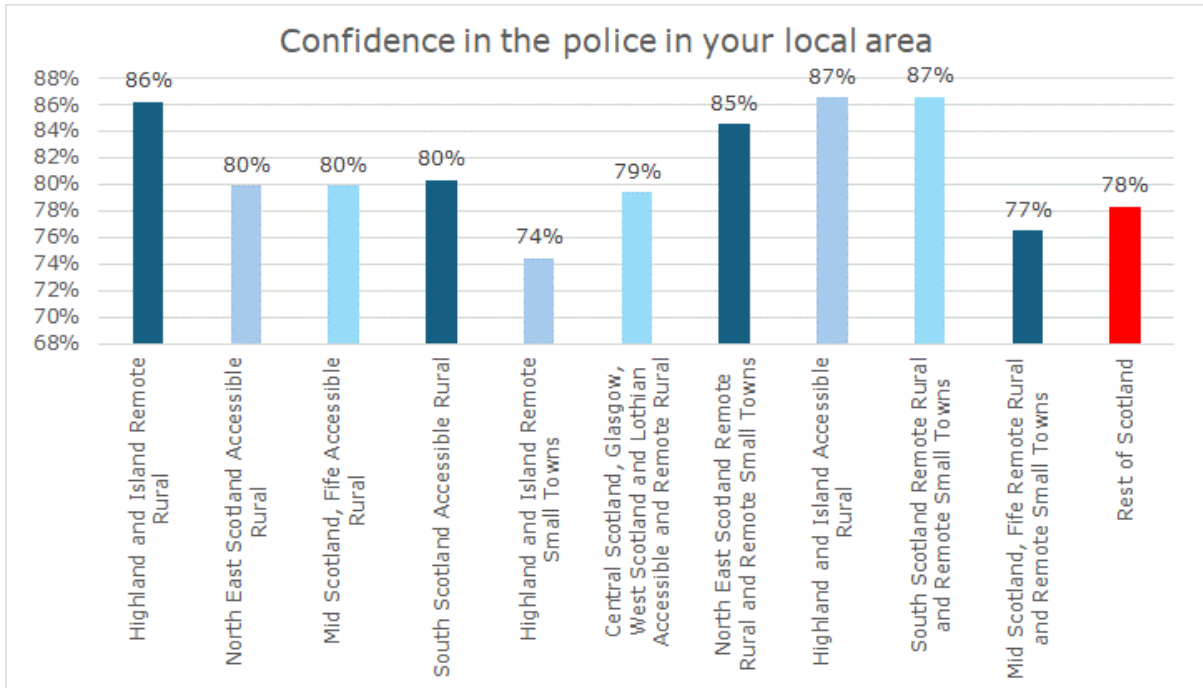
### 3 RURAL AND REMOTE SCOTLAND: CONFIDENCE IN THE POLICE

3.1 In Remote Rural Scotland as a whole, levels of confidence in the police and various aspects of policing are also notably higher than for the rest of Scotland, with the differential ranging from between 1% and 6%. In terms of the greatest amount of difference, people living in rural and remote Scotland show higher confidence in the police in relation to responding appropriately and in a timely fashion, and in tackling antisocial behaviour, as compared with the rest of Scotland.



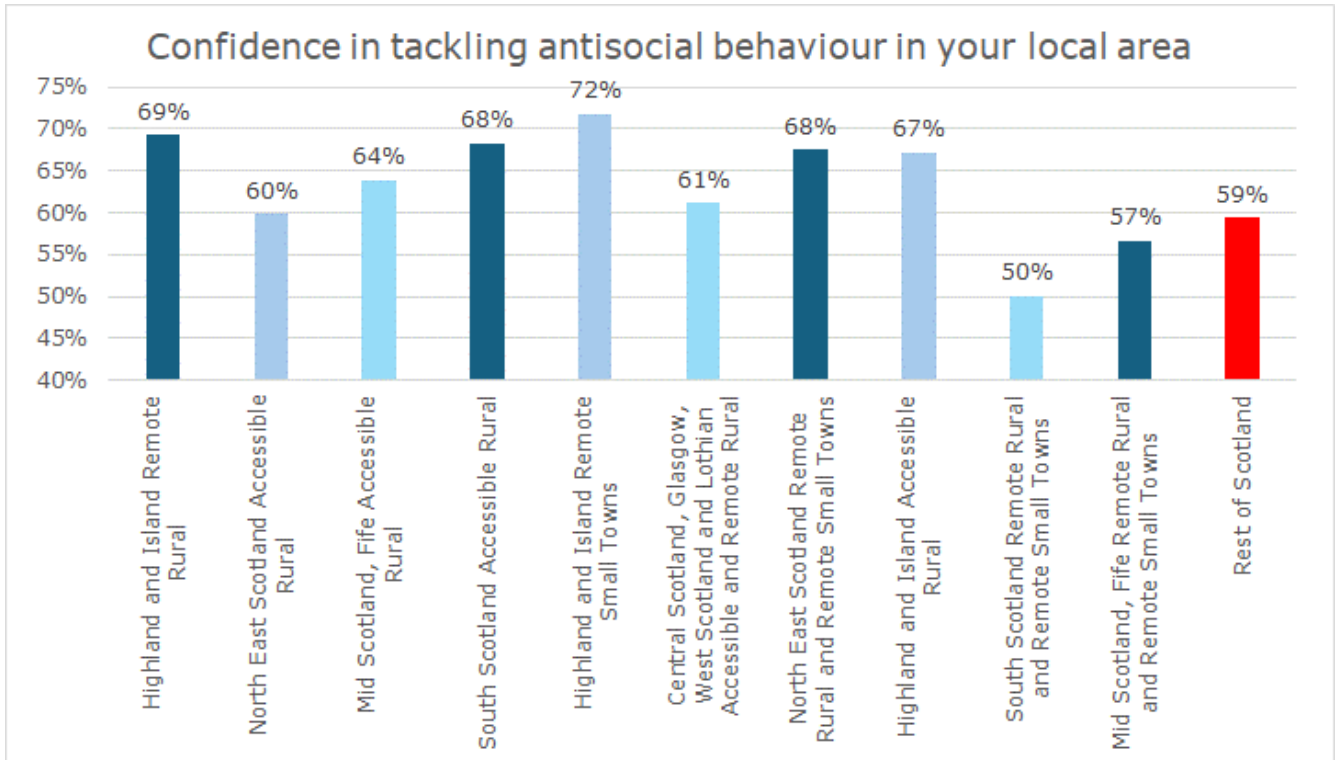
3.2 There are variations between rural and remote communities in Scotland in terms of their level of **confidence in local policing**: As with trust, there are relatively high levels of confidence in local policing in parts Highland and island, and South Scotland. There is a notable contrast in Highland and Island, however, with people living in remote small towns saying they have less confidence (74% with high or medium confidence) than for all other rural and remote areas, and also less than in the rest of Scotland (78%).

3.3 Regarding **crime prevention**, there is a very mixed picture among rural and remote areas. For example, in Highland and Island, levels of confidence are much higher than the rest of the country (between 73% and 77%), in contrast to remote areas of South Scotland (49% - much lower than the rest of Scotland’s figure of 65%).



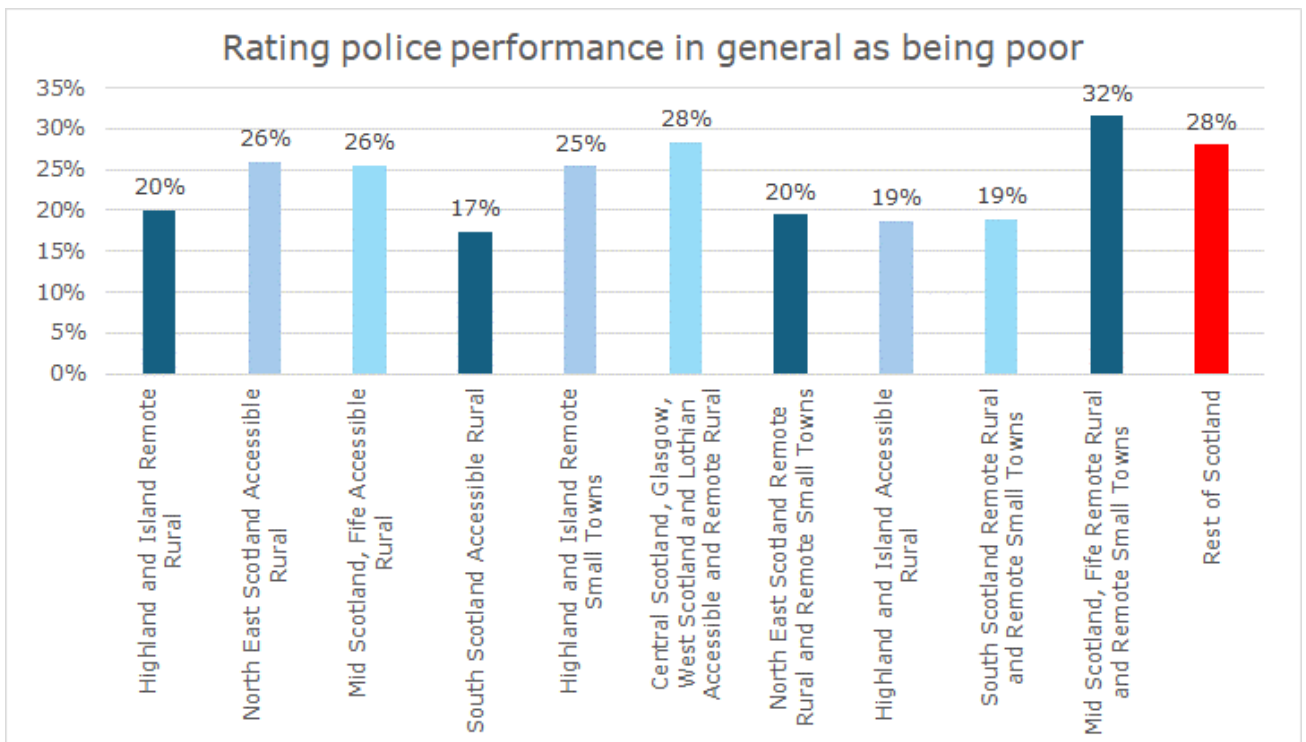
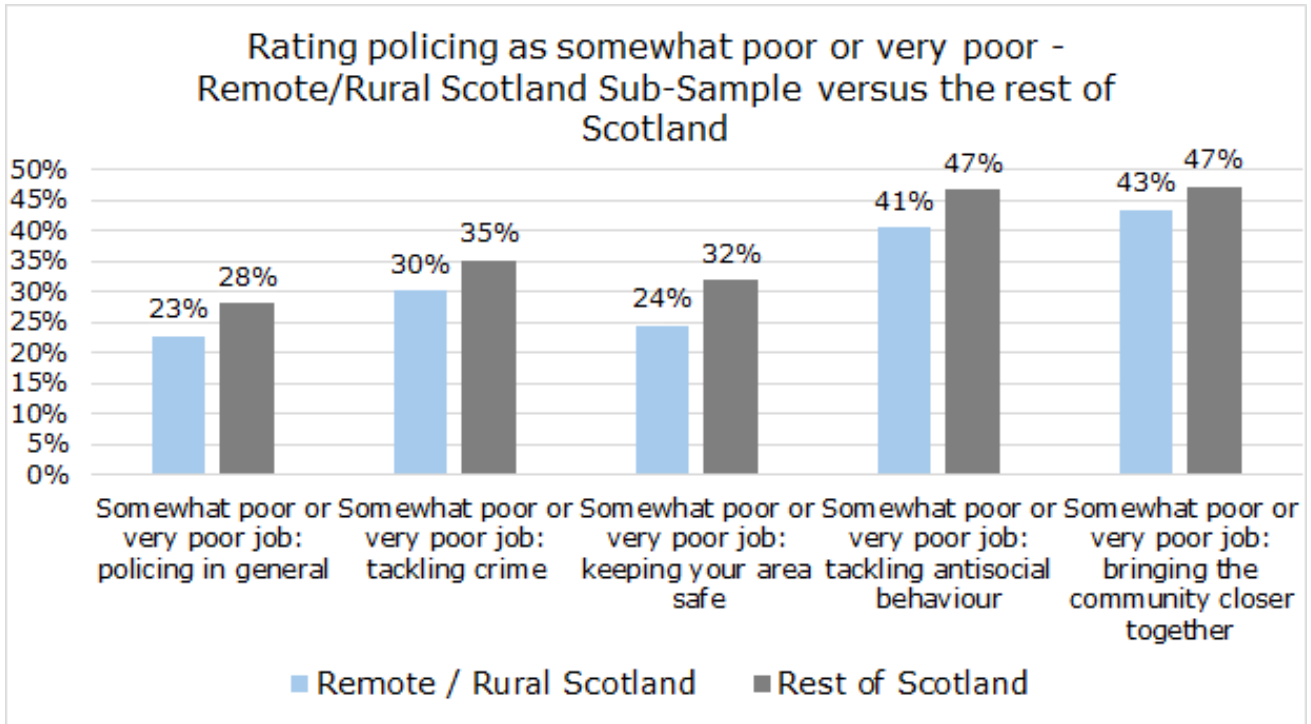
3.4 In relation to tackling antisocial behaviour, the Authority’s public polling results over the last two years have seen consistently lower levels of confidence being expressed among the public, versus tackling crime and policing more generally. In Rural and Remote Scotland, there is generally a higher level of confidence in the police regarding tackling antisocial behaviour than in the rest of Scotland, however the data does show some notable variation, with confidence ranging from 72% in remote small towns in Highland and Island, to 50% in the case of remote areas of South Scotland.



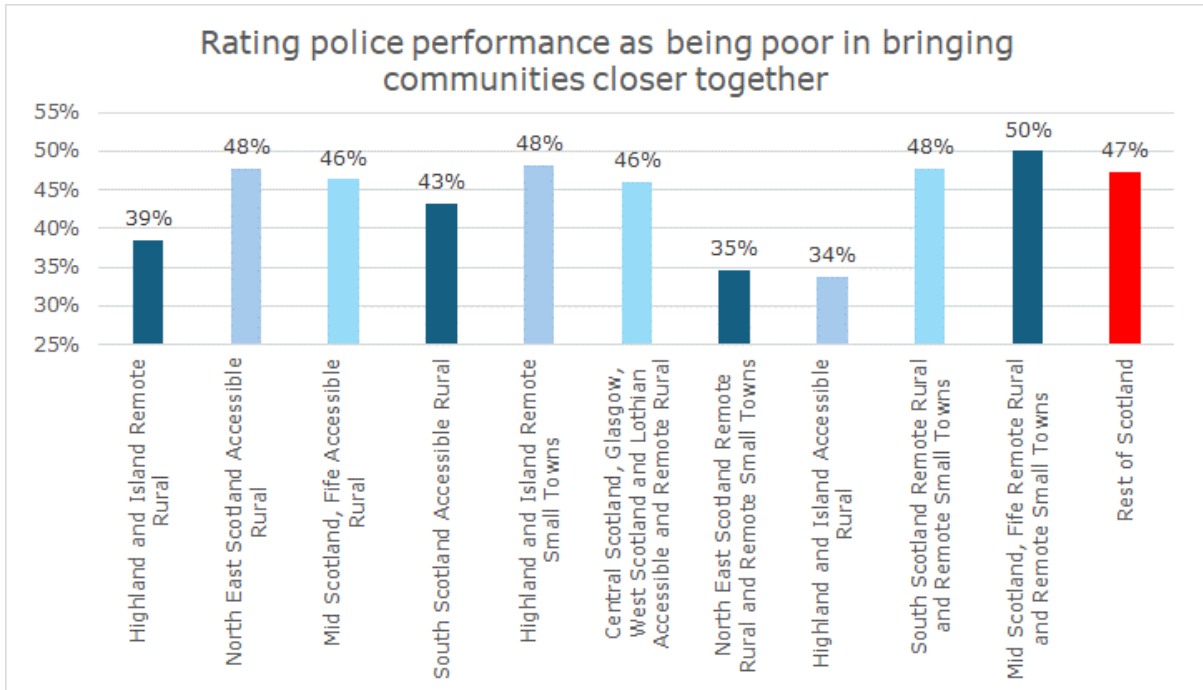


#### 4 RURAL AND REMOTE SCOTLAND: HOW GOOD A JOB ARE THE POLICE DOING?

- 4.1 The majority of people in Scotland rate police performance as being very good, good, or at least fair. Around a quarter of people, however, rate policing in general as being poor, and this rate increases in relation to tackling antisocial behaviour and bringing communities closer together, to almost half of all people.
- 4.2 In Remote Rural Scotland, people are less likely to rate the police as doing a poor job, than people living in the rest of the country, with the difference typically varying by about 5%. The largest distinction (8%) relates to how well the public rate the police at keeping their area safe, with 24% of people saying 'poor' in Remote Rural Scotland compared with 32% for the rest of Scotland.
- 4.3 Negative views about policing performance in general vary among Remote Rural Scotland depending on geography: for example, 17% of people rate policing as poor in accessible rural areas of South Scotland, yet this rises to 32% of people in remote areas of Mid Scotland and Fife.



4.4 One of the areas where the public’s view on police performance is relatively less positive relates to bringing communities closer together. Almost half of people in Scotland rate the police as doing a poor job in this area, and many rural and remote communities in Scotland align with this position. There are some exceptions, however, in remote and rural areas of Highland and Island, and remote areas of North East Scotland.



## 5 DEEPER DIVE CONCLUSION

5.1 This deeper dive analysis of how trust and confidence in the police varies in Scotland according to rurality and remoteness has highlighted a number of key points:

- People living in rural and/or remote areas of Scotland generally have higher levels of trust and confidence in the police, and rate police performance more positively, compared with the rest of Scotland.
- Views towards the police tend to be more positive in relation to a number of policing matters in the largely rural and remote areas of Scotland, principally Highland and Island, North East Scotland, and South Scotland.
- Whilst there is less confidence in the police and more negative ratings of performance for tackling antisocial behaviour than most other aspects of policing, the view among people living in more rural and remote areas of Scotland is clearly more positive than people who live in the rest of Scotland, especially in Highland and Island.

## ITEM 2.4: APPENDIX 3

# Scottish Police Authority – Policing in Scotland

Report by Diffley Partnership

August 2024





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# 1. Background and Methodology

## 1.1 Background

Diffley Partnership was commissioned to conduct regular polling of the Scottish adult (16+) public on policing in Scotland and related issues of interest to the Scottish Police Authority (SPA). This polling is bi-annual and is completed using the ScotPulse online panel.

As part of this polling, respondents were given the opportunity to take part in follow-up qualitative research, and two focus groups were conducted with those from hard-to-reach groups who identified in the polling as having low levels of trust and confidence in the police.

## 1.2 Methodology

The focus groups were held online via Zoom online video software on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> May and Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2024. A total of eight people took part in the focus groups. The profile of participants relating to their age, gender and location<sup>1</sup> is included in Table 1.1. Participants were selected from their survey responses. People were invited to participate if they indicated they had low (0-3 on a 0-10 scale) trust and low confidence in the Police now and over the past 12 months.

**Table 1.1: Profile of participants**

Reference	Focus group	Age	Gender	Rurality
1	1	65	Male	3 – Accessible small town
2	1	61	Male	2 – Other urban area
3	1	52	Female	2 – Other urban area
4	1	77	Male	5 – Accessible rural
5	1	39	Female	4 – Remote small town
6	2	31	Female	1 – Large urban area
7	2	66	Male	2 – Other urban area
8	2	66	Female	6 – Remote rural

<sup>1</sup> [Scottish Government Urban Rural 6 Fold Classification](#) has been used to determine rurality





This report sets out the findings from the focus groups conducted after the fourth wave of regular polling. The focus group discussions aimed to gather context on why people may have low levels of trust and confidence and what Police Scotland could reasonably do to foster trust and confidence in the community.

The full discussion guide can be found in Appendix 1 which includes key sections on local community, trust and confidence and interventions police Scotland could adopt to gain this trust and confidence back. Participants were provided with an information sheet prior to the session which outlined the requirements and provided assurance that personal interactions with the police did not need to be detailed. When participants shared more detail they were reminded they were under no obligation and facilitators checked in regularly to ensure all participants wanted to continue in the session.

### **1.3 Report Structure**

This report explores the perspectives of participants in these focus groups focussing on policing in Scotland, examining different experiences and approaches to foster trust and confidence in local communities. The report broadly follows the structure of the discussion guide:

- local community,
- interactions with police Scotland,
- trust and confidence,
- policing in the media,
- intervention

The focus group discussions were transcribed and analysed thematically. Illustrative quotes are included throughout this document.



## 2. Local Community

This chapter presents qualitative findings on participants' perceptions of their local communities. It commences with some general observations about how participants describe their communities. Findings are then organised under the issues arising within communities.

Key issues mentioned by participants provide interesting context to the later findings around attitudes to the police.

### 2.1 Key Findings

- Participants were broadly positive about their local area. However, issues were raised around young people in the local area, antisocial behaviour, road traffic and provision of local services.
- Issues with young people included antisocial behaviour, however this issue was also raised independently and was not exclusively linked with younger people.
- Some participants were concerned about speeding in their local area. However, the increase in the number of motorised bikes used on footpaths was the biggest concern.
- Participants expressed concern and frustration about a decline in provision of local services in their local area.

### 2.2 General observations

Participants were broadly positive when discussing their local community. Those sharing positive sentiments about their local area reported good quality of life and access to local services:

*"Where I live is a twenty-minute drive into [city], a five minute walk to the country and a ten minute walk the other way to the coast, so it's quite a nice location really."*



One participant in a very remote rural area shared that they have no access to local services, however this did not negatively affect their perception of their local area:

*"It's really rural where I live, my nearest neighbours are probably about a quarter mile away. I'm very isolated. I don't have any local services where I stay, I have to travel about seven miles to access anything. Everything's a car journey for me which feels like a small price to pay."*

### 2.3 Theme 1: Young people

Participants were broadly negative about young people in their local area. However, they identified that young people in the local area are bored and have nothing to do.

Some instances of troublesome behaviour included young people throwing eggs at houses and cars, chapping the door and running away, stopping people on the street for a 'jump in', where those who are underage ask those who they perceive to be old enough to buy them alcohol and/or cigarettes, and hanging about in groups which intimidates other local people.

There were no positive stories shared involving young people and those sharing views on young people ranged in age and rurality. However, participants agreed that young people started to "cause bother" as a source of entertainment due to a lack of provision in the area.

### 2.4 Theme 2: Anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour was raised as a general issue within local areas. This was in addition to the issues specifically raised about young people. Again, comments on antisocial behaviour were raised by most participants and spanned all ages and areas.

One participant explained they did not understand the legal requirements for newly built estates to have a percentage of homes made available for social housing. They had a perception that antisocial behaviour in the area is solely related to those living in these houses:



*“We’ve had a drug dealer, vandals, motorbikes on pavements and burglaries. 99% of the community are great but when you’re wedged in amongst a whole host of people from the council, well, I’ll just leave it at that.”*

Another shared that there are places they do not visit in their local town as it is known as an area with high levels of antisocial behaviour:

*“So with lots of different areas you’ve got your good areas and your not so good areas, but that’s the usually”*

Another aspect of antisocial behaviour included littering and flytipping. Participants shared their disappointment in the volume of litter in their local areas and a perception that this had grown as a problem over time, for example:

*“I remember when I would visit as a kid when I was younger and it was always very clean here, I would always be really surprised. Now, it’s just not that way anymore. The garbage and the flytipping is everywhere. I feel like we’re gonna drown in it eventually. Nobody is picking up and it’s embarrassing.”*

## 2.5 Theme 3: Road traffic

Issues with road traffic were spontaneously mentioned in both focus groups. This was primarily raised by those in rural areas who were over 50 years old.

Participants were concerned about speeding in their local area, with one explaining that groups of cars meet up in their area every week:

*“We have boy racers racing up and down the road every Sunday. I bought a little gun to check their speed and they do exceed the speed limit excessively.”*

Indeed, other participants reported instances of ‘car meets’ in specific car parks in their area and it being common knowledge in the area to avoid these locations after a certain time of night.



Participants also shared their experiences of motorbikes or mopeds being used on pathways. This led participants to feel intimidated and unable to leave their homes after a certain time for fear of being run down on a pavement:

*“There’s a cycle track only a few hundred yards over the back that gets used as a race track by those wee motorbikes. You can’t use it for fear of being hit.”*

## 2.6 Theme 4: Provision of local services

The provision of local services was broadly seen as limited and dwindling across the country. Those in rural areas reflected that they never felt they had easy access to any local services, however those in more urban areas have seen a decline, believing that this is a problem within their communities.

*“They’re [local services are] all getting cut. Nobody’s got the money for them. Anything anyone tries to start, it’s just immediately shut down. The council would rather spend their money on their own wages than anything else”*



## 3. Interaction with Police Scotland

This chapter focuses on views towards Police Scotland. This includes unprompted reflections, participants' opinions towards Police Scotland and recollections of past interactions with the service.

### 3.1 Key Findings

- Participants exclusively used negative language to describe Police Scotland. Even when prompted, participants could not think of a positive intervention associated with Police Scotland.
- Participants are aware of resourcing issues within Police Scotland. However, discussing the resourcing issues did not elicit any empathy from participants. Instead, participants raised questions about how the police use their resources.
- Every participant had some degree of interaction with Police Scotland. The participants explained the reason for their distrust in the police is predominantly due to these direct interactions.

### 3.2 Opinions of Police Scotland

Participants were asked to describe Police Scotland, and to describe what comes to mind when they think of Police Scotland.

Participants overwhelmingly used words with negative connotations to describe Police Scotland. Including words and phrases such as a 'joke', 'misogynistic' and as 'a boys club'. One explained they say a disconnect between what the police say and do:

*"As far as I'm concerned Police Scotland is totally incompetent. I would describe them as being sexist and racist. I think there's a lot of propaganda about how they treat women, especially victims of domestic abuse, and the reality is far from what is portrayed."*



When prompted to share the reasons behind these opinions, participants had several different reasons for feeling this way, including familial connections with people who have worked with Police Scotland:

*“From having family that have worked within Police Scotland I know they are an ageist organisation and if you have a bully boy or micromanagement mentality then it’s the place for you.”*

*“I’d find it difficult to really know if it was a friend or a foe that’s coming to my door, if they were to ever need to.”*

Unsurprisingly, given the focus groups were intended to be with those with low trust and confidence in the police there were no positive opinions shared either about Police Scotland in general or the work done in local communities.

### 3.3 Resourcing and capacity

In both focus groups, the capacity and resourcing levels of the police force were spontaneously mentioned:

*“I think that it’s very obvious when you call them in that they’re under resourced. I work in a large supermarket and we deal with the police. When we need to get them in for shoplifting there was one time they were dealing with teenage runaways and they had to stop looking for them to respond to our call. They said it themselves, they just don’t have enough people.”*

However, this led to participants debating if resource is currently used in the best ways:

*“It’s very clear that they’re not always using the resource they’ve got on the things you and I would like. Yes, they are short on resources, and I understand that, but we need to ask them how they concentrate their resources.”*





Some participants expressed their concern about the frequency they see police in their local area, with some equating a low police presence as a negative perception:

*"In the past ten years I could count on one hand the number of times I've seen the police here"*

Participants also raised concerns about the right people being in the right jobs. There was a perception that police officers were 'bullies', and some negative stereotypes and behaviours were raised:

*"I think you tend to have more people of a right-wing persuasion on the police than you would left-wing."*

*"I think misogynist type people see opportunities within the police force that shouldn't be there for them."*

### 3.4 Personal experiences

Every participant spontaneously mentioned their interactions with Police Scotland and told their stories without being prompted by a facilitator. They were reminded that they did not need to share this information as part of the discussion but felt comfortable enough in the group to do so, and gave the details they were comfortable with sharing.

All stories had a common sentiment and this was *frustration*. Frustration was largely due to lack of communication; whether that be about the progress of a case or the ability to talk to a police officer about their concerns. One participant told of their experience through the pandemic where a lack of communication left them feeling unimportant:

*"We reported a crime in 2020, after the beginning of the pandemic, it was a big issue involving aspects of domestic violence to theft and fraud. They've done nothing. To this day they're still done nothing. The police took it all down in statements but there's been no follow-up and you can't get answers about what's happening. They just don't care"*



Another shared their experience after a violent, gender based, attack, which they believe should be handled differently and with more sensitivity:

*"I was involved in, I was attacked by a man, and it was always male officers that turned up. It was always male officers doing the questioning. They turned up at my door right after it happened, it was pitch black outside and just the nature of everything going on you're already jumpy. Then it's a lone guy turning up and banging on your door, it's just really poorly handled."*

Another questioned the conduct of the officers, believing they were ultimately treated unfairly. Several participants have raised formal complaints.

Again, no participants could recall positive aspects of their interactions with the police. One did praise the police officer investigating an incident they were involved in however this was caveated with negative language.

*"It was nice the policewomen was so keen to find the person involved in the incident, but I didn't feel like anyone cared until they found video evidence and I've not never heard anything about it since."*

Participants could not identify any local policing initiatives and did not feel informed about local policing or crime within their local area.



## 4. Trust and Confidence

Reasons for low levels of trust and confidence are explored within this chapter. The chapter also includes reflections about why perceptions have changed over time.

### 4.1 Key Findings

- All participants agreed they currently have no trust or confidence in the police to help them in a time of need.
- The interactions shared in chapter 3 had impacted the trust and confidence they held in Police Scotland. Participants believe that without change, more people will similarly lose trust and confidence.
- Participants could recall a time when they held a more positive perception of the police. This was typically before the formation of Police Scotland. Historical policing and recollections of regional police forces were discussed with positive language and connotations.
- Despite identifying the same key issues with both Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service, participants show a level of empathy towards the ambulance service which is not afforded to the police.

### 4.2 Reasons for low levels of trust and confidence

Individual interactions discussed in Chapter 3 impact the levels of trust and confidence participants hold in the police. However, there are some overarching themes arising which also impact how the police are perceived. Indeed, several participants do not have faith in the police because they do not see any action being taken about issues they are concerned about:

*“They don’t arrest domestic abusers. They don’t arrest people for burglaries. I’m left wondering, what do they do here? Put on a uniform and write reports? I just don’t know”.*



For others, they cannot overlook their own interactions; the number of times they have reported incidents with the same experience has left them with no hope:

*“I’ve reported things before and even after this [interaction previously mentioned], but it’ll be brutally honest with you it was the complete straw on the camel’s back for having absolutely no faith in either the Crown Protection Service or the police.”*

### 4.3 Change over time

All participants, across both focus groups, were in agreement that their opinion has changed over time. The locality of police was raised as an issue, with several pinpointing the formation of Police Scotland as a reason behind this change:

*“When it became Police Scotland they lost their identity.”*

*“So the problem is when all the locals funnelled upwards into one organisation and really what we want is for that to get reversed because you used to have, for instance, like the Inverness, Strathclyde, Dundee, Edinburgh, they were all obviously the police, but different forces within themselves.”*

*“When I was a little boy there was a policeman in the village and he would know everybody. If there was a problem, he’d know where to go to sort it out.”*

Participants did not only suggest changes in the police force as a cause for these issues. Indeed, participants identified a behaviour change within their communities and an apparent lack of respect that was not present when policing was local:

*“about six months ago, three youths started a fire in a school here. Where are the parents? That sort of thing wouldn’t happen years ago because the old neighbourhood would come down on you. The community would know you did something like that, but now nobody talks to each other.”*



Participants linked this with a lack of discipline within communities:

*"It's about discipline. People are not as disciplined these days. Things used to be dealt with in the village or by the local police officer and you'd have enough respect for them that you'd be scared."*

Ultimately, despite participants observing changes within the community, they brought the conversation back to a perceived lack of action by Police Scotland:

*"It's the follow through. There's no follow through about anything. I think that's because there's no accountability. If you know you don't have to follow through and no one's going to call you on it, just put it at the bottom of the pile to be forgotten about. The police are just not following through with anything anymore."*

#### 4.4 Comparisons with other emergency services

There was a stark contrast when discussing other emergency services. The language used to describe ways other services are different was much more positive, and many participants were empathetic to other first responders.

The Ambulance Service was most commonly used as the example for comparison by participants. Indeed, the language change when discussing how underfunded the ambulance service is a stark contrast to that which was used to discuss Police Scotland:

*"They are genuinely there to try and help, they do the best they can. They are shorter resourced for the work they do. They do a very good job with the resources they've got."*

Response times were also discussed as being lengthy, as with Police Scotland, however this was rationalised by participants in a much more positive way:

*"They are literally doing the best they can, you know, I mean, they've obviously got to prioritise, and they must be getting phone calls all the time for people, for stupid things,*



*that people don't need an ambulance for people. But it's just the nature of the beast. It's just people trying to all use the same service and they're having to prioritise."*

Resourcing was an issue which was spontaneously mentioned for both Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service across both groups. However, when considering the reasons for the empathy towards the Ambulance Service and apparent lack towards Police Scotland, participants believe this to be due to the empathy shown towards them as a service user:

*"It's all down to the respect shown to those who need the help."*

*"they (paramedics) have a certain sensitivity that the police seem to lack. The police tend to lack a certain sensitivity towards people that are different. You don't hear about misogyny amongst the ambulance drivers, you don't hear about the same things that you hear about the police. Maybe it's attitudinal."*



## 5. Policing in the Media

This chapter includes findings on the role the media plays in shaping public perceptions of the police which was spontaneously mentioned, in significant depth, over both focus groups.

### 5.1 Key Findings

- While the role the media plays in shaping public opinion did not form part of the discussion guide, it was spontaneously mentioned and used to explain why participants have a lack of trust in Police Scotland.
- Participants could give examples of high profile investigations, both at a national and a localised level.
- Negative coverage of high-profile cases or police activity has influenced participants' opinions.
- Participants discussed the influence of politics in policing, which is often highlighted within the media. This allowed for the new hate-crime laws to be spontaneously mentioned. Participants were typically dismissive of these laws.

### 5.2 High-profiled incidents or investigations

High profile incidents have eroded trust in Police Scotland, which are still in the media as investigations are happening. Indeed, both the Sheku Bayoh case and the M9 crash were spontaneously mentioned by participants.

The most common high-profile investigation referenced was the 'missing £600,000 of SNP money', with participants sharing their frustrations about the lack of communication about progress and ultimately, the feeling of being kept in the dark about public money.

However, there was some empathy shown by one participant:





*"I do feel sorry for the police sometimes cause a lot of police officers out there are trying to do a good job. It's not what it seems on the news."*

### 5.3 Politics in policing

Indeed, participants believed that politics influences policing, and this was highlighted in the media:

*"We need the political interference to stop. It's very clearly evident that we've got political interference at a very significant level going on, not just in Police Scotland, but in various other organisations throughout Scotland. Get the politics out of policing."*

There was a spontaneous mention of hate crime in the focus groups, which participants felt was politically motivated. Participants were not supportive of the new hate crime laws and the time spent on these issues:

*"It's a waste of time and money when they could be out solving real crimes."*

However, when debating hate crime laws, some participants agreed it was more likely to be observed in some areas more than others:

*"All it needs is for a football match in the west of Scotland and you'll see some hate crime."*

Ultimately, participants dismissed the importance of the new hate crime laws. However, they did so in a way which continued to partly blame the police for their creation:

*"It's [hate crime] usually just someone getting offended or insulted in a certain way, I mean, that's not hard to investigate."*

### 5.4 Chief Constable



Participants spontaneously recalled instances of the Chief Constable appearing in the media. One participant recalled an article including a discussion from the Chief Constable in a newspaper where the police did not come across well:

*“The question is who organises the priorities? If you read the papers today you’ll see that the new chief constable has a problem with them too. So we’re not alone.”*

Indeed, there was continued discussion about other issues the Chief Constable has raised. There were concerns raised about extracting the police from societal issues without making it clear what other agencies should be addressing this:

*“The lady who’s now leading Police Scotland, she thinks that mental health issues are not things that the police should be dealing with, they should be dealt with by others. But who should be then?”*

Indeed, many participants cited local-level public relations as an area for improvement for Police Scotland.

*“Even just reaching out to local communities, if they had a flyer or something to say, this is us, we’re your local police, we’re here if you need us, we do care. Because I think a lot of us just feel like the police don’t really care. I think we don’t feel protected and safe because we don’t really feel like they care that we’re safe and protected.”*



## 6. Interventions

To conclude, this chapter includes suggestions by participants to help Police Scotland regain trust and confidence in local communities. Interventions which were spontaneously mentioned and debated by participants are discussed in turn.

### 6.1 Key Findings

- The types of interventions raised by participants included:
  - transparency, communication and accountability,
  - community engagement,
  - partnership working,
  - management and resourcing,
  - sharing best practice between forces in the UK.
- Participants shared a wide range of ways Police Scotland could gain back their trust and confidence. However, the language they used was typically negative and they did not have confidence in Police Scotland to change.

### 6.2 Transparency, communication and accountability

Improving transparency and open communication is regarded as an important factor in rebuilding trust and confidence in Police Scotland. It would help make Police Scotland more welcoming to the public. Indeed, one way to facilitate open communications was a suggestion to hold community-based events:

*“If they held an event in a local area they could invite the local community to come. The police are there to hear how frustrated people are. What they could do to counter the problems in the area. Then that way people are feeling heard.”*

Other participants were in agreement with this and believed this would be a useful intervention in their local area:



*"I think that would be great. They might think, 'I didn't realise that was a problem in this area' and they could at least say we can't solve it all but at least we know what the big issues are to you in the local area."*

Participants would also be interested in more communication about operations and outcomes of internal investigations. There was a call for more public reporting, to highlight the positive work of Police Scotland, rather than the focus be on the routinely negatively driven media content:

*"If I start seeing statistics that show they're solving 50% more burglaries rather than less than 10%, that they're catching shoplifters, that they're prosecuting domestic abuse, then I will have confidence. I'd have confidence with tangible results."*

Participants also discussed how they would appreciate more transparency in the training and development provision of officers. Most believed there is little to no training given to new police officers and this leads to a lack of trust:

*"I don't know what kind of real training they're getting. I suspect when dealing with mental health and that sort of crisis, I don't think they've got adequate training."*

There were calls for vetting police candidates. Participants want reassurance that full background checks are completed on applicants to the force, some suggesting psychological profiling and personality testing:

*"Screening and vetting should be incredibly important with something like the police force."*

*"Some tests are a bit ridiculous but I'd like some reassurance that we're not hiring psychopaths as police officers."*

### 6.3 Community engagement



Effective community engagement is vital in building trust with communities. Indeed, most participants reflected that they do not have any, or know of any, ways in which the police in their local area engage with the community. They felt listening to community voices is essential for understanding the community:

*“Being seen out and about in the community more. You usually see the police appear after a major incident. If someone’s been stabbed you’ll see them out in force. If they were maybe out in these areas they would prevent the stabbings in the first instance. They need to be proactive rather than reactive.”*

There was also a feeling that police were often seen going by in cars, and should instead be at street level and walking pace:

*“I think if you were to have more police on the beat, so to speak, there would be more of a presence and therefore maybe would deter some crime because you could actually see them. I very rarely see the police now and any time you really see them is when they fly past you, trying to catch people, or catch people speeding on the road.”*

One participant suggested relationships need to be repaired and would like to know more about their local police:

*“I think it’s evident that we don’t really know the police and what we know about them is negative rather than positive. So it’s relationships and respect I think is lacking.”*

Targeted relationships with young people to help deter youth anti-social behaviour and intervene in a positive way was suggested:

*“in the States, the police often, particularly in the large cities, they often sponsor police athletic leagues and they are involved with Big Brothers and Big Sisters. So many times they’re involved with troubled youth, with kids without missing a parent or orphaned. And they have basketball leagues, football leagues. So and they engage, they coach the kids. And I think that helps an awful lot that they may do that”*



## 6.4 Partnership working

Building partnerships with other public services was viewed as an overall good thing, but participants could not pinpoint the services which Police Scotland could bring the most value to.

Indeed, participants were apprehensive about suggesting potential partnerships Police Scotland could form in the community as there was an underlying worry that the partnerships would not be successful and “the wrong people could get involved”.

However, participants did raise areas they believe Police Scotland could do more collaboratively, including mental health and anti-social behaviour.

## 6.5 Management and resourcing

Management and ultimately the resourcing of Police Scotland was raised throughout as a negative, and some ideas were raised on how to combat this. However, the discussions around management were intertwined with negative language and there was not a clear recommendation or intervention that would help improve overall trust and confidence. For instance, one participant shared their views on poor progression practices:

*“We need an improvement in management as we do with the NHS and other state organisations. The cream’s not rising to the top. Those with connections, or those involved in the right cliques, are probably the ones that are getting the top management positions.”*

Participants reiterated that things need to change and gave examples of why, however no participant proposed a solution outwith ensuring hiring practices include vetting. Discussions around resourcing were similar. Almost all participants called for change but could not pinpoint a way to do this. Indeed, participants commented on perceived time wasting rather than provide ways to change:

*“A friend of mine is part of the Alba movement and helps with their bridges campaign. Once a week they go to a bridge over a motorway and fly flags for an hour. They do no*



*harm but have been arrested and taken to the police station because they are distracting traffic. Why waste those resources on someone who wasn't causing any harm? If you're under resourced you need to focus your time more wisely."*

## 6.6 Sharing best practice

Finally, participants recommended a network to share best practice among other police forces within the UK. They talked about their own experiences of using best practice in their own work life and believe this could be a way to instil change. Also, looking for best practice in the force and examples where employees may have ideas of whys to change working practices for the better:

*"Many corporations, they do something called best practices. They often will pull their employees to get ideas. How do you, how can we improve your work life? How can we improve our company? What ideas do you have? The police could do that and pull their members and say give us ideas for best practices. What have you seen? What could we do better? Do you have an idea that we can implement throughout Scotland? Something that's working in your community? And, you know, I think that would be a good way to share ideas and maybe improve the force"*





## Appendix 1: Discussion Guide

### Scottish Police Authority

Discussion Guide – draft 1, May 2024

#### Set up

Introduce Diffley Partnership Team

Welcome to the interview/ focus group–

- Explain the discussion will last up to 90minutes.
- There will be plenty of time to get your views across and discuss issues between yourselves, something we encourage; my role is to keep the conversation flowing, ensuring we cover the broad areas we need to and ask any follow-up questions,
- Fully anonymous and confidential; The Diffley Partnership abide by the Market Research Society Code of Practice and the SRA Ethical Guidelines.
- Request permission to record discussion – with your permission I will record the discussion; this is just so we can go back and listen again after the discussion

**Do you have any questions before we start?**

#### Introductions and opening discussion (10 mins)

To begin, I want to give everyone the opportunity to briefly introduce yourselves: your first name and whereabouts you live in Scotland.

How would you describe your local neighbourhood?

[Prompt: what would you say is your quality of life?]



How would you describe the local services in your area?

[Prompt: range, availability, engagement]

**Interactions with police Scotland (25 mins)**

How would you describe Police Scotland?

[Prompt: What comes to mind when you think of Police Scotland?]

How often do you have any interaction with Police Scotland?

What has been positive about these interactions?

What has been negative about these interactions?

How well informed do you feel about local crime and policing in your area?

**Confidence (15mins)**

How would you describe your current level of confidence in Police Scotland?

[Prompt: Why is that?]

[Prompt: Have you always felt that way? If not, then what has changed? Why has your level of confidence changed?]

How does this compare to other emergency services?



[Prompt: What do these services do that Police Scotland don't?]

Do you have confidence in the police to deal with the things that matter in your community?

[Prompt: If no, what could they do better?]

### Trust (15mins)

How would you describe your current level of trust in Police Scotland?

[Prompt: Why is that?]

[Prompt: Have you always felt that way? If not, then what has changed? Why has your level of trust changed?]

How does this compare to other emergency services?

[Prompt: What do these services do that Police Scotland don't?]

Do you have trust in the police to deal with the things that matter in your community?

[Prompt: If no, what could they do better?]

### Interventions (25mins)

How well do you think Police Scotland engages with your community?

[Prompt: Do you think there is a police presence? Would you describe this as positive or negative?]



What could Police Scotland do better in your local area?

What could the police do to earn/earn back your trust?

What could the police do to earn/earn back your confidence?

What types of things should local police focus on?

Who should they partner with in these areas

[Prompt: Local authority, residents associations]

[Prompt: Do you know what issues the police deal with locally?]

[Prompt: responsibility for anti-social behaviour]

#### Conclusions and wrap-up (2 mins)

Thank you very much for the discussion, **is there anything not already covered that you would like to mention?**

Thank and close



**Mhairi McFarlane**

Research Manager

[mhairi@diffleypartnership.co.uk](mailto:mhairi@diffleypartnership.co.uk)

**Mark Diffley**

Founder and Director

[mark@diffleypartnership.co.uk](mailto:mark@diffleypartnership.co.uk)

*From many voices to smart choices*

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